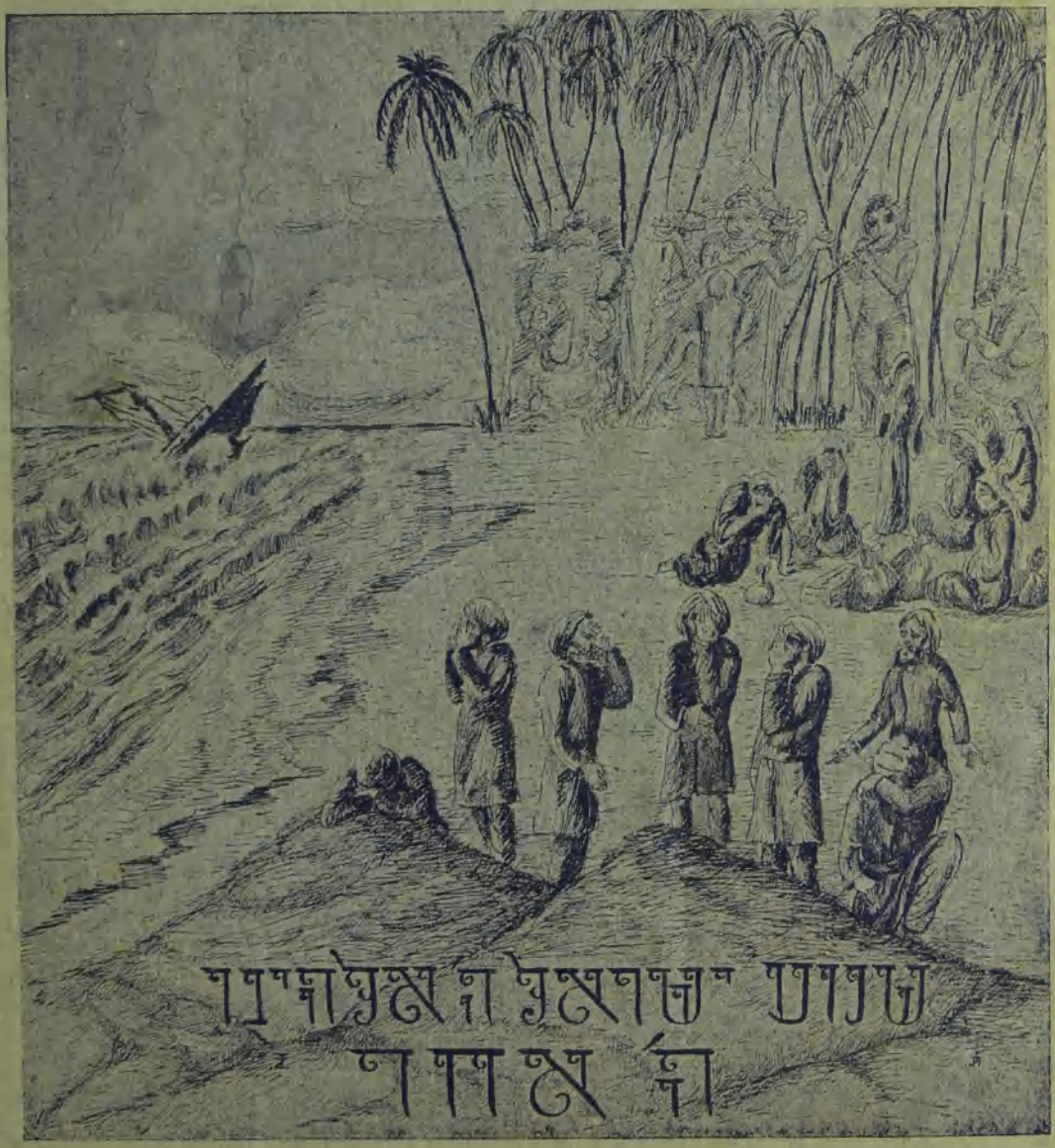
THE HISTORY OF THE BENE-ISRAEL OF INDIA

BY

H. S. KEHIMKAR



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Gokak Mills Ltd

= Gokak Falls =

1st April 1938.

THE HISTORY

OF THE

BENE ISRAEL

OF INDIA

BY

HAEEM SAMUEL KEHIMKAR

London Agent
GEORGE SALBY
BOOKSELLER
65, Great Russell st., W. C. I.

Published by the
DAYAG PRESS LTD.
Tel-Aviv 1937

Agent for India:
J. HYAMS (KEHIMKAR)
185, Halal Bldg
Mount Rd. Mazagon, Bombay

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Dr. IMMANUEL OLSVANGER
JERUSALEM

PRINTED AT THE DAYAG PRESS LTD, TEL-AVIV, MIKVEH ISRAEL STR. 21

ALLIANCE ISR. UNIVERSELLE PARIS

To the noble and glorious Community of the Bene-Israel of India.

My dear friends,

I consider it a great privilege indeed to be partly responsible for the publication of late Mr. Kehimkar's „History". Some 40 years the manuscript lay hidden in the possession of the author's family. During my recent visit to India it was handed over to me. A few South-African Jewish friends undertook to defray the cost of this publication.

I have treated the manuscript with great piety and have not ventured any changes as to the vocabulary or the style of the author. Only here and there I have omitted a few passages, and that with the consent of the author's son, Mr. Joseph Hyams of Bombay

May this book achieve its purpose in bringing you nearer to the rest of Israel, which will always remember with admiration and gratitude that you kept alive the torch of Judaism with a heroism and fortitude unparalleled by any other branch of our ancient and ever young nation. True, amidst the tolerant and hospitable people of India you have never been subjected to any persecutions. But for nearly 2000 years you have lived in that country without any concrete symbol of our faith. Faint recollections of inherited customs have been your only guides. There was however that sentence never forgotten by you: "Hear o Israel, God our Lord, God is One".

You have found, after having come into contact with the rest of Jewry, a wonderful synthesis between the ancient civilisations of Israel and India, and for that you are to be congratulated.

I feel sure, this book will stimulate you to delve deeper into your past, to continue inquisitive studies of your still dark history, to rediscover yourselves fully and to bring to the notice of the world the great men of genius that flourished amongst you.

With best regards from the Jordan to the Ganges

Yours affectionately

J. Olsvanger

Jerusalem, 1937.

Haem Samuel Kehimkar

"A good name is better than precious oil". Such was the motto of Haeem Samuel Kehimkar, founder of the Israelite school (now called the Sir Elly Kadoorie School) in Bombay, and the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society, two institutions that have done so much to ameliorate the lot of the Bene-Israel.

Haeem Samuel Kehimkar was born in 1830 at Alibag, a village about 25 miles south-east of Bombay. His father, Samuel Jacob Kehimkar, a man well versed in Marathi and Modi, was Inspector (Sar Pantoji) of Schools under the auspices of the American Mission. From him his son Haeem acquired his early Hebrew and religious training. After completing his Marathi education in his native village, Haeem was sent to study English, but circumstances soon compelled him to seek employment. His first post was at the Military Board Office; in 1856 he was transferred to the Office of the Inspector General of Ordinance where he served until his retirement. His studious habits, his zeal for acquiring English, and his untiring devotion to his work soon earned for him the respect and appreciation of his superiors who raised him gradually to the position of Second Assistant.

Alerady early in his carreer, Haeem turned his attention to plans for the alleviation of the sufferings of the Bene Israel Community. In 1853, with the help of a few associates he founded the Bene Israel Benevolent Society for the support of the indigent and helpless of the community. He was secretary and treasurer of this society until 1868 when he left Bombay on the Ordnance Office being transferred to Poona. Here, too, Haeem continued his interest in the movement, and showed much concern for the welfare of the local Bene-Israel children. In 1878, after 27½ years' faithful service, Haeem rretired. On his retirement he was offered a

remunerative post in the Bombay Municipality which he declined, being resolved to devote his life henceforth to the service of his poor community.

Three years previously, in 1875, under the auspices of the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society which he had founded in 1853, Haeem had been instrumental with the aid of his two brothers and a few other helpers, in opening a school where Marathi and Hebrew was taught. But owing to lack of cooperation it could only be kept going with the greatest difficulty. Now, however, Haeem was free to put all his energy into the cause and he succeeded in interesting the Anglo-Jewish Association of London in his work. Thus after a thorough investigation, the Association at length promised its support, and in 1881, the school now called the Israelite School, was opened in a new commodious building, Haeem was appointed President, a post which he retained until his death. Here pupils of both sexes were taught up to the Matriculation Standard of the University of Bombay, with Hebrew as the second language.

In spite of the aid given by the Anglo-Jewish Association and of grants and subscriptions from other quarters the school soon found itself sadly in need of increased financial assistance to enable it to carry on efficiently. Appeals to the Bene Israel synagogues meeting with little response Haeem decided to open a Prayer Hall in conjunction with his school, hoping to drive thereby, apart from the educational advantages, some additional income for the school, a step which in spite of the opposition of the synagogues and protests from members of the Anglo Jewish Association he insisted on carrying out.

In 1892, he published his "Sketch of the History of the Bene-Israel and Appeal for their Education". In the same year he formed the idea of acquiring permanent premises for the school. A building fund was started under the patronage of Lord Harris, the then Governor of the Bombay Presidency and in 1898, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Claud G. Montefiore, then the President of the Anglo Jewish Association, whose sympathy Haeem succeeded in enlisting, the present school building at Mazagon with

its spacious grounds was secured. The opening ceremony was performed in January 1899 by Lord Sandhurst, the then governor of Bombay.

Not content with locating the school in its own building Haeem now set to work to collect an Endowment fund, and thus ensure the permanency of the institution. In this he was aided by his sister-in-law whom he induced to bequeath her estate valued at some 22,000 Rupees in trust to the school rather than to leave it to his own children, as she had intended.

Many other were the plans which Haeem had in mind in connection with his school. He had a great desire to open a workshop where students could acquire some technical education. He had also hoped to have a Head Master and Head Mistress for the school from England, and also to attach a Hostel to the school, but none of these plans was he destined to realise.

Ever since the opening of the Prayer Hall Haeem began to experience opposition on the part of the Committee. For some time he ran the school single-handedly, until dissatisfaction with his authority led him finally to tender his resignation to the Association, thus severing his connection with an institution which he had founded and which he had patiently fostered for over 28 years.

Soon afterwards, yet before his resignation had been officially accepted, Haeem was taken ill, and he died on October 9th 1909 at the age of 78.

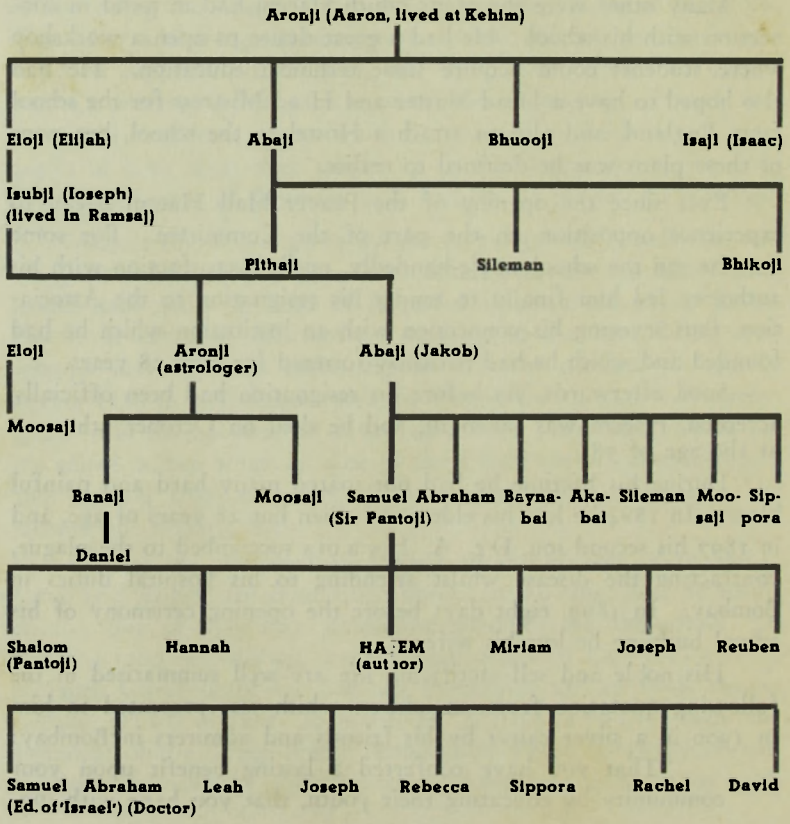
During his lifetime he had not spared many hard and painful blows. In 1884 he lost his eldest son when but 28 years of age, and in 1897 his second son, Dr. A. Hyams succumbed to the plague, contracting the disease whilst attending to his hospital duties in Bombay. In 1899, eight days before the opening ceremony of his school building he lost his wife.

His noble and self-sacrificing life are well summarised in the following quotation from an address which was presented to him in 1900 in a silver cascet by his friends and admirers in Bombay:

> "That you have conferred a lasting benefit upon your community by educating their youth, that you have with dig-

nified calmness disregarded their aspersions; that you have zealously worked at the sacrifice of time and money, for their amelioration, that you have elevated them from darkness and ignorance to light and refinement; all these the salient features of your work speak volumes for your large heartedness and just appreciation of that highest ideal of reward, which lies in the patient and persevering performance of one's duty itself."

GENEALOGY OF THE AUTHOR



PREFACE

In placing before the public this account of the Bene-Israel of the Bombay Presidency, we think we need make no apology for having selected a subject in which the civilized world has already begun to show a deep interest. Many writers, scholars, professors and Doctors both in philology and divinity have occupied themselves in seeking to trace the whereabouts of "The lost ten tribes of Israel", and some have thought that they have discovered traces of them in communities like those of the Bene-Israel of whom we treat here.

Although accounts of the Bene-Israel have been given by several foreign writers, yet these are meagre and conflicting, written more or less on superficial observation. Literary men have before now expressed their wish to know "whether the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came about sixteen hundred years ago, or long before, or long after, and whether they came direct from their native country, or whether they were only an early offshoot of the Jewish Community"?*) They have also expressed their opinion that "it would probably be possible to learn a great deal more about the Bene-Israel than has ever yet been ascertained, and that any genuine information would excite considerable interest in Europe". Further it has been said, "We should like to have a History of the Bene-Israel, as our knowledge about them has scarcely advanced since the days of Dr. Wilson, and their traditions will die out unless they are speedily gathered." A suggestion was also made in the Times of India in 1886 that a reliable account of the Bene-Israel should be written by some Rabbi of the Jews in other parts. But such a writer might commit errors similar to those into which foreign Gentile and Jewish writers have already fallen. For, a foreigner, even though he were a most learned Jewish Rabbi, could hardly be expected to do justice

*) Times of India 8th September, 1886; 11th April, 1887.

to this subject, as he would not be likely to know the various domestic practices and peculiar customs of that people. Hence none but one born and brought up in the community about which he writes, could be expected to give a reliable account of his people; and this view is quite consistent with that of the great historian Lord Macaulay, who says somewhere, that an Englishman only is competent to write a history of the English people, a Frenchman of the French people and so on. The truth of the statement is rendered quite clear by comparing histories of the Jews written respectively by those who are Jews and those who are not. Among the former, Professor H. Graetz' "History of the Jews from the Earliest Times to the present day," has gained its well-known popularity owing to the copious and correct information it gives about the Jews.

We, who have the honour of belonging to the community of Bene-Israle, have therefore set ourselves to supply to the best of our humble ability, the above mentioned want, with the hope that thereby we may be able to rectify and to supplement the faulty accounts sometimes given by foreigners, and even we regret to say, by one of the Bene-Israel themselves who has left the faith of his community.

Here we avail ourselves of the opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to the British Government for the liberty both in action and in speach which all British Subjects uniformly enjoy under the British rule in India. The kind treatment which the Bene-Israetl have received at the hands of British Officers both Civil and Military, to which was first due their coming to be known as Bene-Israel instead of "S h a n w a r T e l i s" (Saturday oilmen), as well as the remembrance of the present and past priviliges accorded to them, without any distinction of caste or creed, clime or country, cannot but impel everyone of our community to acknowledge with gratitude the favours they have received.

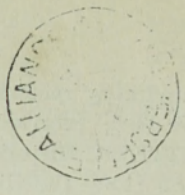
We may be permitted to say that ever since the British rule has prevailed in Bombay and in the other parts of the Presidency, the Bene-Israel have always been the object of special interest and good will on the part of British Military Officers, owing to the hitsorical interest of their community, their skill and staunch loyalty, and their discipline and valour as soldiers.

Before concluding these prefatory remarks we must thankfully acknowledge the assistance we have received from the following publications : BOMBAY GAZETTEER; Histories of the Jews by Dean Milman and Professor H. Graetz; the History of the Hebrews' Second Commonwealth by Dr. Isaac M. Wise; Dr. Smiths' "Bible Dictionary"; "The British Jews" by the Rev. John Mils', "Sketches of the Anglo-Jewish History" by Mr. James Picciotto; the Eighteen Treaties of Mishna translated by the Rev. Dr. A. De Sola and the Rev. M. J. Raphall; the translation of Hebrew Ritual by the Rev. D. A. De Sola; "The History of the British Empire in India and the East" by Dr. E. H. Nolan.

We trust that the account given in the following pages will prove interesting to those who are anxious to learn about the Bene-Israel, and that it will prove especially so to the Jews of foreign countries, and also to many Bible students, since most of the rites and ceremonies herein detailed will be found to furnish a living testimony to many of the passages of the Holy Writ.

HAEEM SAMUEL KEHIMKAR

Bombay, 1897.



CHAPTER I.

Advent of the Bene-Israel in India.

The Bene-Israel of the Bombay Presidency have found their home in India for very many past centuries. Few, however, even of those learned in history and antiquity have been able to come to a clear conclusion as to who their ancestors were, at what time and from what place they came to India, to what tribe they belonged, what circumstances led to their emigration from their Native Country, in what social and political condition they were when they last lived there, with what vicissitudes of fortune they met when they immigrated into India, what reason their descendants had for adopting the name "Bene-Israel", with what rites and ceremonies they celebrated occasions of births, marriages and deaths, what fasts and feasts were observed by them before the religious revival effected amongst them by David Rahabi; or what changes have taken place amongst them since that event. Similarly, few have a clear idea as to what customs and manners now prevail among them,—customs which, foreign writers on the subject of the Bene-Israel say, are tinged with pagan notions,—what estimates have been formed of their virtues in time of peace and war by distinguished civil as well as military officers; what services they have rendered to this country; and, lastly, what is their present social and moral condition, and what are their most urgent present necessities.

We have examined the following accounts given of this people by different foreign writers.

(1) The late Dr. Wilson gave a short account to the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on its anniversary meeting held in 1838, and published it in the "Lands of the Bible" *). He there shews that the Bene-Israel have been established for many ages

*) Vol. II. pages 667—679.

in this country and takes the view that they belong to the lost ten tribes of Israel.

(2) Israel Joseph Benjamin II, who has also written an account of the Bene-Israel in his work entitled "Eight years in Asia and Africa" from 1846-1855," which was published in Hanover in 1859, has almost entirely followed Dr.Wilson. He not only owns that the Bene-Israel are real Jews but says likewise that they are lineal descendants of the ten tribes, who in the time of Hoshea, the last king of Israel, were carried away by the Assyrians.

(3) But Dr. Wilson in his "Appeal for the Christian education of the Bene-Israel" published in the year 1866 relinquishes his former opinion. For he states in his more recent treatise that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came from Yemen or Arabia Felix in the sixth century of the Christian Era; whereas according to his former opinion the "Bene-Israel have been established for many ages in this country and really belong to the long exiled sons of Israel". This last view clearly requires that they must have come to India when the Assyrian Kings removed them from Palestine at the fall of the kingdom of Israel, 555 B.C. or even earlier viz. in the time of King Solomon.

(4) Jacob Saphir in his work entitled "Eben Saphir", Vol. II, published in Hebrew at Mainz in 1875, agrees with the later view of Dr. Wilson with regard to the native place of the Bene-Israel; but as for the time of their immigration into India, he differs from him, and holds that they belonged to the tribe of Juda and that they came hither about sixteen hundred years ago, i.e. in the third century of the Christian Era.

(5) The "Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency" (Vol : XVIII Part I. pp. 506) gives an account of the Bene-Israel, in which the compiler states it as his opinion that they came to India in the sixth century, either from Aden or from the Persian Gulf.

(6) In the "Indian Antiquary", pp. 321—323, an account of the Bene-Israel has been published in November 1874. But it is nothing more than a reproduction of the account given by Dr. Wilson in his "Appeal for the christian education of the Bene-Israel".

(7) In the ninth edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol.

XIII published in 1881, a plain account of the Bene-Israel is given without drawing any conclusion as to the time and place of their emigration.

As all the foreign writers do not come to the same conclusions, we proceed to offer our own account, which, we hope, will tend to throw out a little important additional light on the above-mentioned points.

Let us, therefore, start with a glance at the earlier History of this people, which will put our readers in a position to draw a more correct conclusion.

It has been asserted by some that on the fall of the Kingdom of Israel, the ten tribes were entirely driven away by the Assyrian King from their country, but such was not the case; for according to II Chronicles, XXX, remnants were still here and there left in Palestine, and we are told that Josiah reigned over them. (II. Chron. XXXIV. 33. XXXV. 17 and II. Kings XXIII). In like manner when the Kingdom of Judah fell 130 years after the fall of that of Israel, remnants of that people were still left in Palesine, and Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, was appointed Governor over them. (II Kings. XXV. 22). "A few of the dispersed Hebrews", according to Dr. Isaac M. Wise, "found their way into Egypt and the Ionian Islands, also into Ethiopia, Arabia, India and China. Others may have gone with the Phœnicians to the Western coasts of Europe and Africa. Still the bulk of Hebrews of the two former Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, inhabited the Medo-Persian Empire. Prophets and bards*) had kept alive in the breasts of many Hebrew-patriots the hope of a national restoration to the land of their fathers, the re-building of the temple on Mount Moriah, thre reinstitution of their ancient polity, and the reconstruction of the Kingdom of Heaven".

Among the dispersed Hebrews that found their way into India at this time are to be included, we believe, the ancestors of that part of the Jewish community now found inhabiting the Malabar coast, who since the arrival of the "White Jews" have been known as "Black Jews". There is every reason to believe that the "White Jews" are comparatively new-comers who have travelled in modern times to

*) Especially the Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the authors of the five chapters of the Book of Lamentations, and Daniel.

India from Europe, Egypt, Arabia etc., for the surnames of many of them (such as Rottenburg, Tumborek, Mizrahi, Rahabi, Ashkenazi, Tuffa, Zebib, Zackai, Kindil, Ashuri, Sargon etc.,) go to prove that these were taken from the names of the places whence they came.

As regards the remnants of the ten tribes which were left in Palestine especially in Galilee or the "Northern Privinces", from which as we are about to suggest the ancestors of the Bene-Israel seem to have come, Dean Milman says that "the Northern Provinces, the most extensive and flourishing inheritance of the ten tribes, became gradually populous, if we are to believe later accounts, to an incredible degree; but in polity,and religion, they no longer kept up the independence or asserted the superiority of Israel or Ephraim. Whether descendants of the original ten tribes, who from insignificance or from poverty escaped the deportation, or of those who slowly migrated back from the East to the lands of their fathers.... we should have supposed that their sympathies as kindered would have allied them with Samaria; that the northern confederacy would have accepted the temple on Gerizim as its national centre of worship. On the contrary, not only do they become pure and unidolatrous worshippers of the one true God; but Jerusalem is their Capital. They go up to the temple on Mount Moriah to their feasts. If they had some settlers who from Judah or Benjamin mixed with them, and who retained what may be called their legal domicile with their own tribe, these can have formed but a small part of the vast population of the two Galilees, which were joined not merely in religion but in political unity with the South, who not only worshipped in Jerusalem but rendered allegiance to the ruling power whether that of the high Priests or that of the Royal Asmonean house. It is true that in the time of the Maccabees, the Jews were few in Galilee—so few that they were rescued from the tyranny of heathen tribes, who dwelt with them, and brought into Judea"*).

According to Dr. Isaac M. Wise, the American Jewish Historian, "it is almost certain that a large number of Hebrews at an early date emigrated to Samaria and Galilee, for the latter was in after times one of the most populous provinces, and the Hebrew origin of its inhabitants was never doubted. The Hebrews of Juda were

*) History of the Jews by Dean Milman, Vol. I, p. 442.

brought in close contact with Galilee on its annxation to Judea by Alexander the Great. It is also evident that the body highest in authority among the Hebrews, at the time of the high Priest Eleazar. consisted of seventy-two men, as Aristeas, Philo and Josephus agree that seventy-two translators, "six of every tribe" were sent to Philadelphus by Eleazar. Had the body holding the highest authority been composed of a large number of men, Eleazar would certainly have sent a corresponding number of translators. If Aristeas' letter be considered spurious, it would not be supposed that Josephus would have adopted the phrase "six of every tribe", if he had not known that in the time of Eleazar the geographical tribe division and the supreme body of seventy-two members existed. In the Mishna, the simultaneous existence of the Sanhedrim and the twelve tribes division is always presupposed, although this distinction was soon forgotten in foreign lands, except in Mesopotamia. Perea and Galilee, the most populous provinces of Palestine, were centainly inhabited by people of the ten tribes, who never left their original homes, and by those who came back from the exile to claim their properties. Their only title was vested in their genealogies; hence every land holder any how was obliged to uphold his genealogy, and this preserved the geographical tribe divisions. When Alexander added Samaria, and with it Perea and Galilee, to Judea, the twelve tribes of Israel were reunited again and the Great Synod could exist no longer, because it consisted exclusively of the aristocracy of Judah, Benjamin and Levi. It had to be replaced by the old council of Elders, "Six of each tribe", which was done in the time of the high priest Eleazar, and this council of Elders received the Greek name of Synhedrion or Sanhedrin" *).

While Professor Graetz states that "a few of the Hebrews such as agriculturists, vine-dressers and shepherds, no doubt, remained in the country after the fall of the Kingdom of Israel and others from noble families, especially those from the borders of Judah, took refuge in that country", yet "when the band arrived from Persia under the leadership of Zerubabel, Hebrews from many countries, from East, West, South and North, from Egypt, Phœnicia and even from the Greek coast and islands whither they had gone

*) History of the Hebrew Second Commonwealth by Dr. I.M. Wise.

of their own free will or had been sold as slaves, streamed back to crowd like children around their resuscitated mother Jerusalem"*).

It appears from the above extracts that there were many Hebrews in Galilee or in the "Northern Provinces", but that their number was very much diminished owing to the frequent incursions that were made upon Palestine by foreign foes. King Ahasveros, the Persian monarch in the eighth year of his reign, after the capture of Zidon, besieged and took Jericho. He then took many captives, led part of them with him into Egypt, and sent others to Hyrcania on the Caspian Sea, to settle part of that country in 338 B. C. In 332 B. C. Alexander the Great transplanted 10,000 Hebrews to his new colony in Egypt and bestowed on them equal privileges and immunities with Macedonians. His successor Ptolemy carried away 10,000 Hebrews captives in 321 B. C. and settled them chiefly in Alexandria and Cyrene. He also enrolled 30,000 in his army. Besides the above, many of the Hebrews emigrated to Egypt between B. C. 320 and B. C. 314, and then again in 312 B. C. owing to dreadful anarchy which prevailed in Palestine during the destructive warfare waged by the generals and successors of Alexander the Great from 321 to 301 B. C. During this period Palestine twice fell into the power of Antigonus and was twice regained by Ptolemy, to whose share it was finally adjudged after the decisive defeat of Antigonus, at Ipsus in 301 B. C. Antiochus the Great took Palestine from Ptolemy Philopater in 219 and 218 B. C. when the Hebrews, especially of Galilee, suffered much during the two years war. But Philopater took it again from him. Palestine having thus been subjected to frequent invasions, a natural consequence was that the people took precautions to avoid the threatening evils, which they had reason to fear would be of the worst type as Antiochus Epiphanes, or Epimanes the madman, made great havoc when attempting to exterminate the religion of the Hebrews and to substitute that of the Greeks. As many as 40,000 Hebrews were put to death in three days and as many more sold as slaves. Not being satisfied with this ruin, he proceeded to more cruel and wanton outrages against the religion of the people. He entered every court of the Temple, pillaged the treasury, seized all the sacred utensils, the

*) History of the Jews by Professor Graetz. VoVl. I.

candle-stick, the table of shewbread, the altar of incense; and thus collected booty to the amount of 1,800 talents, equivalent to Rupees 14,78,25,000 *). He then commanded a great sow to be sacrificed on the altar of burnt offerings, part of the flesh to be boiled and the liquor from the unclean animal to be sprinkled over every part of the Temple; and thus desecrated with the most odious defilement the sacred place which the Hebrews considered for centuries the one holy spot in all the universe. Consequently there is every reason to suppose that many of the Hebrews of the ten tribes in the Northern Provinces, at or about the invasion of Antiochus Epiphanes, 175 years before the Christian Era, would have left the country and sought refuge in obscure countries; and this may have been the reason why there were very few Hebrews left in Galilee or in the "Northern Provinces" in the time of the Maccabees as stated by Dean Milman. Even so small a matter as a simple riot in Bombay which commenced on the 11th. August, 1893 and terminated on the 14th. of that month between the Mahomedans and Hindus caused as many as 50,000 souls to desert Bombay for Gujurat and the Konkan; what innumerable multitudes, then, may have been induced to leave Palestine when that country was subjected to such frequent invasions for years together?

There seems reason to suppose that it was at the time of hostile inroads made into Palestine by foreign foes that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel of the Bombay Presidency left their homes, and in particular about the time of the invasion of Antiochus Epiphanes 175 B. C. There were two routes ready for them at that time by which to travel to India. One of these lay through the ports of Elath and Ezion-Geber, which were originally, as it would seem, opened by King Solomon for commerce with those of India and other countries. These ports lay to the North of the Gulf of Arabia, anciently called the Elanitic or Akabagulf. They were conquered more than two centuries after Solomon's death by Resin, King of Syria, and were probably wrested from the hands of the latter Kingdom by either Alexander the great or his successors. The other

*) This is on the supposition that the talent was the gold one equivalent to about £ .5475. a talent (see Dr. Scott's Bible commentary).

route was through Egypt. This was a safer and more convenient way, and must have been preferred to the former; and as the Hebrew colonists in Egypt were faithful adherents of the Ptolemaic royal house, the ruling Emperor of the time was accustomed to receive cordially Hebrews who came from Palestine. It is therefore most probable in our opinion, that the Bene-Israel came from Palestine some two thousand years ago through Egypt via the Red Sea at a time when Cheul, situated on the Konkan coast, thirty miles south of the present Bombay, was a great emporium of trade with Egypt.

From the ancient history of some of the ports lying on the coast of Konkan, as given in Vol XI of the Bombay Gazetteer, we learn that of all the ports lying on that coast, the port of Cheul was one of greatest importance, as it was the chief centre of the Egyptian trade—a trade carried on to such a large extent that according to Strabo (25 B.C.) the Indian fleet in the Red Sea increased in a few years, from a few ships to 120 sails. Cheul is spoken of by the great geographer Ptolemy as the headland and emporium of Symulla or Timulla, between the Binda river or Bassein Creek and Mahad, and is the Perimula of the naturalist Pliny.*) The name of this port in the inscriptions of two of the Kenheri caves of the second century after Christ also corresponds with its modern name. The Konkan was greatly enriched by the development of the western trade, which was followed by the Roman Conquest of Egypt B.C. 30. We also learn from one of the volumes of the GAZETTEER that the Greeks, who traded with Symulla or Timulla (probably Cheul) gave Ptolemy information about Western India. He does not, however, give us any details of the trade which drew the Greeks to the emporium of Symulla. The chief trade of India about this time was with the Red Sea and Egypt in the West. Cheul is, in short, a place of great antiquity, and the name in question appears in the inscriptions of Kanheri, Cheul, Pal, Kol near Mahad, Kudda near Rajpur and other caves. It also apepars in the Periplus of the Eritrean sea as Semulla, the first local mart South of Kalliena. The Chinese pilgrim Hwen Tsang, speaks of the port as Chimolo, (642 A.D.).

*)BOMBAY GAZETTEER Vol XI page 137 Foot note.

It seems highly probable that as Cheul was the chief emporium of trade about two centuries B.C. the ancestors of the Bene-Israel set sail from the mouth of the Red Sea, and were wrecked off Kenery, which is about 15 Miles distant from Cheul Greek. Another argument which we can adduce in support of this position is the fact that most of our people live on the coast of the Konkan at places like Alibag, Roha, Mahad, Rajpuri, Kehim, which are all contiguous to the site of the ancient port, some inhabiting the present village of Cheul itself.

Thus it may presumed, we think, that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel of the Bombay Presidency were a portion of those who left their homes in Galilee or the "Northern Provinces" to seek refuge in countries far from Palestine; and the tradition of the Bene-Israel, handed down from father to son, corroborates the same view. Similarly observations of their fasts and feasts, rites and ceremonies their manners and customs of birth, marriage, death and vows, and their usage of making offerings with frank-incense from time immemorial, tend to bear out the same conclusion, since these, as we have to show more fully hereafter, have their strong points of correspondence with those which were prevalent in Palestine before the destruction of the Second Temple. These circumstances coupled with the facts that the Bene-Israel were ignorant until a recent date of the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (Hannukah) introduced in commemoration of the cleansing of the Temple on 25th. Kislev (November) 165 B. C., that they were ignorant of the overthrow of the Second Temple by Titus the Roman Emperor 70 years after Christ; that they did not keep the four fast days of national mourning which were abolished at the time of the Second Temple; and that they keep up to the present day a distinction between the real descendants of Israel and those who are the offspring of alien women, in accordance with the dictates of the sages Ezra and Nehemiah, all go to prove that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel must have left their mother coutry, which we believe to have been the province of Galilee, before the time of the invasion of Antiochus Epiphanes, 175 B. C.

After their immigration into India, several causes, such as their destitude condition, their ignorance of the counrty and their not

wholly unfounded fears of persecution in a strange land, doubtless suggested to the first Bene-Israel settlers of this Country the desirability of maintaining themselves in obscurity in the land of their adoption, and this habit of remaining in the back ground, first recommended by prudence, would seem to have grown upon them so fast and to have clung to them so tenaciously that even when the necessity for it ceased, it could not be readily shaken off; and now it has become almost their second nature. Moreover, the part of the country in which our unhappy ancestors first settled being inhabited by the less educated classes of Hindus and learning being at a low level, they not only did not make any intellectual progress, but forgot what little knowledge they had brought with them. As to their religious tenets, however, they held fast to their ancient belief which they handed down from father to son in an unbroken line. In other respects, they became submerged in the comparatively total darkness, intellectual and social, in which the Indian masses around theme were then sunk.

We will now turn to an examination of the traditions of the Bene-Israel concerning their ancestors, as well as to an investigation of their fasts and feasts, their rites and ceremonies, their manners and customs, their way of making offerings with frank-incense, the distinction uniformly observed by them in marrying only with women who have been actual descendants of their Israelitish ancestors, and in repudiating the offspring born from alien women, which latter fact when compared with the above historical ones will of itself tend to convince our readers that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel did not come to India from Yemen or Arabia Felix, Aden, Muskat or the Persian Gulf, as has been surmised by Dr. Wilson, by the Bombay Gazetteer and by other foreign writers. For the Jews of Arabia Persia or of any other country, even of Palestine, do not make offerings like those made by the Bene-Israel, nor do they observe as the Bene-Israel do the Law of Moses regarding the restriction of the Blood sacrifice at the door of the tabernacle or Temple, for the Arab Jews perform a superstitious rite in connection with their marriages. These rules excepting the law of sacrifice were not observed by the Hebrews before the Babylonian Captivity, but were introduced by Ezra and Nehemiah; while the four fast days of national mourning which among the Bene-Israel have been observed only since the religious

revival under David Rahabi (at a date variously ascribed to 200-900 A.D.) have been observed by the Arabic and Persian Jews from time immemorial. The conclusion I am supporting seems to be put beyond doubt, however, by the fact that not a single custom of local kind found prevalent among the Jews of those countries is traceable among the Bene-Israel.

The traditions of the Bene-Israel relate that their ancestors came to India about sixteen or eighteen hundred years ago, from a country to the north, *) or from the "Northern Provinces", in order to avoid persecution which followed in the train of its constant invasion by a host of conquerors. But although they went to a new country, they brought with them their old misfortunes. For the ship in which they came to their Indian refuge was wrecked near the Henery and Kenery Islands just off the Konkan coast. These Islands are about 15 miles distant from Cheul. Of the shipwrecked only seven men and seven women were saved, who took refuge on the shores of Navgaw, a village on the coast about five or six miles from Henery and Kenery Islands. Many of the bodies of those drowned were washed to the shores of the very village where the seven surviving pairs took refuge while the survivors were carried to other shores, and their occupants lost to observation until recent times. **).

*) Lands of the Bible Vol. II, 667, by Dr. Wilson.

**) Recent researches have gone to show that the ancestors of the Konkanasth or Chitpavan Brahmins were probably some shipwrecked foreigners, who were cast ashore at the foot of the Sahyadri Hills. The fourteen corpses of these foreigners were, according to a Hindu legend, animated with life on a pyre or chita, by Purrushram, as mentioned in the Hindu Puranas. Purrushram made them Brahmins, and presented them with a strip of land on the coast of the Konkan. The Colony of these Chitpavans was established at Chiplon. It seems that the ancestors of the Chitpavans did not enter the Konkan by land but came in from far beyond the sea. Their fair complexion, their light or grey eyes, and the legend of their shipwreck corroborate the above statement. Some say that the ancestors of this tribe have probably come by ship either from Egypt or through Egypt, while others maintain that they are the descendants of Jews from Barbary, a

The dead bodies of the drowned men and women which were washed ashore at Navgaw, are said to have been buried in two mounds, which are still to be seen in that village, and which are by tradition held to be the graves of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel. *). The survivors lost everything they had brought with them from their homes in this shipwreck, and were in consequence reduced to a miserable plight, more easy to be imagined than described. Homeless and destitute of support, with starvation staring them in the face, they continued to sojourn disconsolate and friendless on the coast, with scarcely any means of living until they took to the occupations of oil-pressing and farming, which, it is presumed, they had been accustomed to follow in their native country, and which has since given them the appelation of SHANWAR TELIS. The literal meaning of this phrase is "Saturday Oilmen". They were so called because they were oilmen who continued to work at their presses throughout the six days of the week, but abstained from every kind of work on Saturday. Their abstinence from work on this day is very significant in so far as it establishes their descent from the race of Israel beyond a shadow of doubt. They now number

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province in Africa, and that they come through Egypt. The immigration of the Bene-Israel into India from a foreign country from beyond the sea is analogous to the immigration of the Chitpavans, who are also said to have come from beyond the sea; the shipwreck encountered by the ancestors of the Bene-Israel corresponds with the legend told of those of the Chitpavans on the same coast, and the identity of the alleged landing places of these tribes, these facts cannot but give rise in every thinking mind to the question : Did the Bene-Israel and the Chitpavans belong to the same stock? A satisfactory solution of this question is well-nigh impossible at this distance of time, in the absence of any historical proof.

*) At Navgaw village, two miles south of Kihim, are two large graves, the one to the north said to be of male and the one to the south of female Bene-Israel, who are said to have been shipwrecked when they first arrived on the Alibag coast. About 150 paces from the two mounds are about 500 separate graves said to belong to the Black and White Bene-Israel of the neighbourhood". Bombay Gazetteer Vol. XI, page 327, Kolaba, and Janjira.

about 10,000 souls, and generally live in the Bombay Presidency.

It is true that historical documents peculiar to the Bene-Israel of the kind preserved amongst Jews elsewhere or charters from Native Princes in India, would have been the safest guide in arriving at correct conclusions as to their nationality, the time of their immigration into India, etc.. The former must have been once in the possession of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel when in their own land, in the form of genealogies handed down from the time of Zerubabel and corrected by reference to numbers and facts presenting themselves at the time of Nehemiah, since Hebrews were not allowed to hold land in Palestine by the Sanhedrin without these documents. But unhappily such have never been possessed in India by the Bene-Israel, having been probably lost in the shipwreck of their ancestors. As to charters from the Native Rajas, if any were ever granted, the fact is now buried in oblivion, as is the case with regard to those of many other races in India. There is, however, one expedient left by which we may hope to gain light on the origin of the Bene-Israel even at this distance of time. A critical examination of the holidays they observe, and of the rites and ceremonies which have been performed by them from time immemorial, not only furnishes a valid test of their nationality, but also affords us material for forming some conjecture as to the time of their immigration. These rites and ceremonies no less than the manners and the customs of the Bene-Israel previous to the religious revival which dates its commencement from the time of David Rahabi, *) and about which we shall have more to say hereafter, seem to have borne a striking resemblance to those practised by the Hebrews in Mishnaic times. It is a plain matter of fact that the descendants of the original Bene-Israel settlers forgot in course of time the real names of almost all their holidays, and only remembered them under names of their own. They counted their months probably by basing their calculation on the Indian mode of reckoning time, the only difference between the Indian and the Jewish months, which are both lunar, being about 12 hours. The Rosh-Hodesh, or the first day of the Jewish month, commences a day after the Indian New Moon.

(1) In the month of Ellul, which after the advent of the Mo-

*) Encyclopœdia Britanica, ninth edition, vol. XIII. 1881.

hamedans into India, they called Ramazan, many devout men and women fasted; and said that it was a month on which the mercy of God was to be invoked preparatory to the day of expiation; but as this month had no name in their own vernacular, it seems that it must have been one of those introduced at the time of the religious revival by David Rahabi.

(2) They observed according to the tradition we have still amongst us the first day of Tishri as Naviàchà san, or the New year's holiday, (Num. XXIX. 1.) but they did not observe the following day as a holiday, as their descendants do at present.

(3) They also did not observe the Third of Tishree as a Fast of National Mourning, called according to Biblical terminology, the Fast of the seventh month which has been observed in the memory of the assassination of Gedaliah by Ishmael (II Kings Chap. XXV 25). It was after the religious revival in India by David Rahabi that this Fast was introduced among the Bene-Israel, who called it Naviàchà Roja (i.e. a fast falling soon after the New Year) in order to keep in remembrance the exact time when it should be observed. As the ancestors of the Bene-Israel did not observe this fast till its introduction among them by David Rahabi, it would seem right to regard it as an indication that they were in Palestine during the part of the time of the second Temple, when the four fasts of National Mourning were abolished under the authority of Zech. (Chap. VII. and VIII, 18), or that they left before these were reestablished.

(4) On the eveneing of the fourth of Tishree they observed a feast of harvest in-gathering, and called it Khiricha san. On this day they prepared Khîr (a sort of pudding made of new corn mixed with coconut juice and some sweets). A dish full of this pudding with a twig of subja (Ocymum pilosum vel basilicum), was placed on a white clean sheet. A censer with frankincense burning therein was also placed near the dish. Keriyath Shema (Deut. VI. 4) was then repeated. This being done, the pudding was shared by the family. None would eat it before the Keriyath Shema was repeated, and this is still observed by a majority of the Bene-Israel. The practice of burning frankincense on this and other similar occasions has been discontinued at the instance of the Cochin Jews, for the last fifty or sixty years. This

feast they observed by a mistake a fortnight before the feast of Tabernacles. (Exodus XXIII 16, Lev. XXIII 39-43).

(5) The tenth of the month of Tishree was called Darfal-nicha San, or the "Holiday of the Closing of Doors". It was of course Kippur or the day of Atonement. (Num. XXIX. 7). Eben Saphir in his travels*) says of the Bene-Israel that on this day they fast and sit with closed doors inside their houses. He says that he could not understand the meaning of the vernacular name, neither could the Bene-Israel explain it well to him; and he conjectures that as there is an additional Prayer of Kippur called the N'ilath Sh'arim or the Closing of the Gates, it may have come to pass that from this the Bene-Israel have given this name to Kippur.

On the day previous to this Fast,**) the Bene-Israel bathed in hot water and then in cold, and this they called Tebila, or "Cleansing". They dined at nine or ten in the morning, supped at about 5 in the evening and fasted till the evening of the next day up to seven O'clock. They did not stir out of their doors, which they kept locked throughout the day. They did not touch people of other religions, nor did they exchange words with them, from the time they took the bath till the next evening. They dressed in white, as they thought it was more than a Sabbath, and also, no doubt, owing originally to their knowledge that the High Priest was dressed in white linen when he entered the Holy of Holies. They held that God forgave their sins on that day. The next day was called "Shila San" i.e. "Stale Holiday", which is of course "Simhat Cohen", or the day of Rejoicing for the High Priest, who after having performed all the services of the day of Atonement, rejoiced and made a festival for his friends when he came out in peace from the holy place. In like manner the Bene-Israel visited one another and were entertained by their relatives and friends on this day, in token of the preservation of their lives in spite of their sins, and gave alms to the poor. This merry-making day is only observed by the Bene-Israel of the Bombay Presidency, and perhaps indicates that their ancestors were of the tribe of Levi. The reason of its observation, no doubt, is that it was observed as a festival in Palestine when

*) Vol. II, published at Mainz in 1874, pages 33,35.

**) This day the Bene-Israel call "Malma" (I. O.).

their ancestors lived there during the time of the second Temple. There used to exist a peculiar notion among the Bene-Israel with regard to this Holiday. It was that the souls of the departed visited their habitations on the day of Ereb Kippur, i.e. the day previous to that of Atonement, and left on the morning of the "Simhat Cohen"; but whether this notion was an original one, or the fruit of later teaching cannot now be ascertained (Num. XXIX 7).

(6) On the 15th. of Tishree falls the Feast of Tabernacles, and it continues till the 23rd. of that month. This feast was totally forgotten by the Bene-Israel, but the Feast of Harvest In-gathering, which was to be solemnized during this week, was, as stated above, through a mistake, observed a fortnight before the proper time. Owing to their forlorn and depressed condition, the early Bene-Isratel colonizers probably could not afford to erect booths, which is a peculiarity of this Feast, (Num. XXIX 12-39).

(7) In the month of Heshwan some devout men and women fasted in the second half of the month on Monday, Thursday and on the following Monday. These fasts were no doubt observed by them under a sense of their frequent unmindfulness of their duty to God, though they were ignorant of this fact. As they had no name of their own for this month, or for these fasts, it must in all likelihood have been one introduced after the religious revival at some time unknown.

(8) The fast of Tebeth which falls on the 10th. of the month of that name, and which is one of the four fasts of National Mourning, and is termed, according to Biblical phraseology, the Fast of the Tenth Month, was not observed by the Bene-Israel before the religious revival; and this is a circumstance which fits in with our theory of the time of their detachment from the main body of their people, as the Fast is one which was abolished during the time of the second Temple, under the authority of Zech. (Chap. VII and VIII 18), at a period when the fore-fathers of the Bene-Israel were in Palestine. It was introduced amongst the Bene-Israel in India after the religious revival, and was called Sababi Roja. We are unable to account for this name; perhaps the word SABABI may have been a corruption of the Hebrew word "Sabab" which means

"to surround or encompass", — i.e. to "besiege". This fast might have been so called because it was instituted to commemorate the first siege, or encompassing of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, as mentioned in Jer. XXXIX 1. and Zech. VIII 18; or, the word may have been an adaptation of the Hindustani word S u b a b, which means "meritorious", as though the observance of these new fasts hitherto unknown by them had been regarded as an additional act of piety or merit on their part. David Rahabi would naturally have used such a Hindustani word, as he did not know Marrathi, and conversed with them, as is generally the case with foreign Jews, in Hindustani only.

(9) On the 15th. of Shebat the Bene-Israel observed the day of R o s h - H a s h a n a L e i l a n o t h, that is, the "New year's day for the Trees", under a wrong apellation of "E l i j a h H a n - n a b i c h a O o r u s", i.e. the day of the "Fair of Elijah the Prophet", who they believed appeared to them at Khandalla, a village near Alibag in Konkan, and thence ascended to heaven on that day. On this day all the Bene-Israel bought various kinds of fruit, and placed them in plates, together with M a l i d a, a composition made of bread of rice flour besmeared with sweets and placed them on a white clean sheet. They also placed a twig of subja and a censer with frank-incense burning therein. They invoked Elijah the Prophet, and said "V e i t e n l e k h a" i.e. the verses of blessing said after the H a b d a l l a, and offered praises in gratitude to the Almighty, who so graciously causes everything to grow in its proper season for men's use and benefit. This being done, the contents of the plates were shared by the family. This day is still observed. R o s h - H a s h a n a L e i l a n o t h must have been, it would appear, introduced by David Rahabi; but after his death, which took place some two or three years after his coming amongst them, the Bene-Israel gave it the name of an O o r u s (Fair), probably catching the idea from the Mohamedans with whom they may have desired to seem in accord.

(10) The 13th. of Adar was kept as a fast, and the 14th. was regarded as a feast. They called it H o l i c h a S a n, as it always fell during the Hindu Holiday of that name. On the 14th. they were accustomed to send presents of sweetmeats, made at home, to one

another but did not remember the original institution of the feast, i.e. Purim (Esther). The Bene-Israel did not observe the second day of Purim i.e. SHUSHAN PURIM.

(11) From the 14th. of Nissan they observed for eight days a holiday called A n a s i D h a k a c h a S a n i.e. "the holiday of the closing of the "A n a s" (an earthen chatty, containing sour liquid used as a sauce). They abstained from using the sour liquid, as well as any leaven, during the period of the feast. They had forgotten the object of this holiday as observed in memory of the deliverance of their ancestors from Egyptian bondage. On the 23rd of the month they uncovered the chatty, and used leaven as before (Exodus chap. XII. 2.).

(12) The feast of Pentecost, which falls on the fiftieth day after Passover, was forgotten by the Bene-Israel, no doubt, owing to the absence of synagogues, and to the want of any marked peculiarity attending the observance of that day. H a t h i m a, i.e. keeping up at night and reading the Bible, was a peculiarity of the day as kept in Palestine; but the Bene-Israel neither had the Bible, nor could they read Hebrew; consequently they could not remember its purpose nor its mode of observance. This holiday was introduced about a hundred and thirty-five years ago when the Old Synagogue was built in Bombay, and hence it has no name peculiar to the Bene-Israel (Exodus, XVIII, 16. Deut. XVI. 10.).

(13) The Fast of Tammuz which falls on the seventeenth of that month, and which is one of the four Fasts of National Mourning, and is termed in Biblical phrase the Fast of the "Fourth Month", was not observed by the Bene-Israel, before David Rahabi's religious revival. The observance of the fast had been discontinued *) under the authority of Zech. (chapter VII and VIII. 18). It was also called S a b a b i R o j a. They had ceased, however, to assign any reason for its observance, and did not remember the original reference of the name.

*) See Babyl. Talmud, Rosh-Hashana, I., in which it is stated that "so long as the Second Temple stood it was not permissible to observe the four feasts of national mourning, because they were days of joy, but since the temple fell, it is allowed, because they are days of mourning".

(14) The Fast of Ab, which falls on the ninth of that month, and which is also one of the four fasts of National Mourning and which is denominated, according to the Biblical mode of expression, the "Fast of the Fifth Month", was not observed by the Bene-Israel befor the religious revival. After it was introduced among the Bene-Israel by David Rahabi it was called Birdiacha Roja. It was so called because they partook at the evening meal which followed the close of the fast of nothing but rice with curry of Birda which is made of Wal, *) a kind of pulse. On the evening previous to the fast their food was served out on plantain leaves. They state that this was done in order to symbolize that the Israelites had no household utensils from which to partake of their food at the time of the loss of their dominion and power. For the previous eight days, they were accustomed to forgo all kinds of meat, and to take only vegetable food. This fast is also called Birdiacha Roja. The latter must probably be the true Bene-Israel name of that Fast as it evidently belongs to the class of the Fasts of National Mourning which, we have remarked, were abolished under the authority above-quoted.

From the above it will be seen that all the Fasts and feasts, which the original ancestors of the Bene-Israel observed, have purely Marathi names, and were invariably called San, which means "a holiday" and are given below :—

Bene-Israel names of Holidays.

Naviacha San, Rosh Hashana (New Year's day).

Khiriacha San, Hag Heasif (Feast of In-gathering).

Darfalnicha San, Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

Shila San, Simhat Kohen (or the merry making Day of the Priest).

Holicha San (Purim).

Anashi Dhakacha San, Pessah (Passover).

The other holidays, which date from the time of the religious revival by David Rahabi, have received their names in Hindustani,

*) Wal are sprinkled with wather day and night till they sprout, when they are husked and cooked with spice.

as it was spoken by David Rahabi with the ancestors of the Bene-Israel.

Ramzan (Ellul).

Naviacha Roja, Zom Gedalia (Fast of Gedaliah or Fast of the seventh month).

I. Sababi Roja, Zom Tebet, (Fast of Tebet or Fast of the tenth month.).

Elijah Hannabicha Ooorus, Rosh Hashana l'ilanoth, New year for the Trees.

II. Sababi Roja, Zom Tammuz, (Fast of Tammuz or Fast of the Fourth Month).

Birdiacha Roja, Tish'a be-Ab (Fast of Ab, destruction of the Temple).

Thus it will be seen that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel observed before the religious revival in India only those fasts and feasts which were in vogue in Palestine during the time of the second Temple. The four fasts of National Mourning, however, were only introduced among the Bene-Israel after the religious revival.

We have stated above our firm conviction that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came directly from Palestine. We shall produce further arguments in support of our statement, and hope to show that they came from that country about 175 years before the Christian Era.

Now, if the ancestors of the Bene-Israel had come to India from Yemen or from any other place at the suggested 1200 years or thereabouts ago, they would previously have given up the practice of making sacrificial meat offerings, as has been done by the Jews of other countries, who have ceased to offer such ever since the destruction of the Second Temple. Those Jews who left Palestine after the destruction of the Second Temple and those who having previously migrated into other lands received in the new lands of thier adoption the reports of its destruction, alike stopped this practice. Moreover, the Jews who had been led into captivity at the time of the destruction of the First Temple and did not return at the close of the 70 years, had already forsaken the custom. But the fact that the practice has been in vogue amongst the Bene-Israel in India from time immemorial, goes to prove that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel were actually in Palestine during the time of the existence of the

Second Temple, and that they left it sometime or other before its destruction, or, in other words somewhere about 2000 years ago. Now, although the offerings made by the Bene-Israel at the present time are styled a "Dish offered in the name of God", yet there is no doubt that we possess in the observance an actual vestige and continuation of the offerings directed in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is true that the Bene-Israel have never preserved the custom of making any burnt-offering, for they had neither their Temple nor an Altar of their own, and therefore instead of the burnt-offering, they observed a strict Fast for 24 hours on occasions when special burnt offering whould have been made. With some changes in the mode of offerings, necessitated by their having to adapt themselves to the time and circumstances of the country they were placed in, they, however, maintained a semblance even of animal sacrifice; for instance, they substituted a goat or lamb for a cow or a bullock at the time of offering, and a fowl where a turtle dove or a pigeon was required, under special circumstances, but not believing them to be blood sacrifices. This change, which the ancestors of the Bene-Israel made, is still observed by their descendants. By slaugthering a cow or a bullock their forefathers might have brought themselves into serious trouble; while a turtle dove or a pigeon could not be conveniently got in the place, where they were settled. It may thus be seen that in making the changes they showed their ingenuity and prudence. By doing otherwise they might become subjected to persecution, or even to extermination. We need not go far to seek for a proof of a similar possibility. At Alibag in December 1884, it was alleged that a certain Bene-Israel had slaughtered a cow, and the whole Bene-Israel communitiy had to make satisfaction for the crime. The matter was brought to the notice of the Angria's widow who at once by her influence had a stop put to the Bazar supplies of the Bene-Israel; consequently they had to obtain them from other stations, and this state of affairs continued for a fortnight, when the Bene-Israel proved that the charge was a false one, and passed a written document to the following effect :—

" We, the Bene-Israel of Alibag, bind ourselves by an agreement to the Hindu inhabitants of Alibag. Owing to the general outcry against the Bene-Israel of having committed a deed (of slaughtering

a cow) against the Hindu religion, you have prohibited the holding of any intercourse with us. But having been assured by us of our not being connected with the deed, you have freed us from the imposition. We thank you for that. No such deed was up to this date perpetrated at Alibag. In like manner, neither we nor our descendants will ever perpetrate a deed of the above kind against the Hindu religion. If we should directly or indirectly, act, or encourage others to act, against this writing, you are free to hold no more intercourse with us, and we will raise no objection to any arranegment you may make. This agreement we have made on our free will, while in sound mind and not otherwise. Dated 23rd December 1884."

Thus they were freed from the imposition.

In support of the theory we have advanced above regarding the time and mode of emigration of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel from Palestine, we think we shall be supplying additional proof, if we describe the offerings that are still in vogue among the Bene-Israel, and the manner of their presentation to God.

Sebah Toda. THE THANKS-OFFERING :— This offering is especially made when any one of the Bene-Israel has recovered from a severe illness, or has returned safe from a long journey either by land or sea, or has been rescued from a gale or storm. It is called a "Dish offered in the name of God" (Khundache nave tabak). No sacrifice of a goat or lamb, as directed in the Mosaic Law, is made in presenting this offering, since the Bene-Israel in common with other Hebrews have no altar now for that purpose. In its stead, the person on whose account the offering is made, fasts for a day, while all other things are being prepared and offered as directed in Lev. VII 12-15. A dish is filled with unleavened rice-bread made by hand and baked in an iron or earthen pan without oil or butter, and the bread is besmeared with sweets (i.e. Malida); *) unleavened cakes mingled with oil (i.e. chappaties), unleavened wafers anointed with oil (i.e. Papud or Phenias), cakes of fine flour mingled with and fried in oil (i.e. wheaten flour Gharries), leavened bread (i.e. rice flour Gharries), pieces of the liver of fowls and goat or lamb, a

*) The word Malida seems to have crept in amongst the Bene-Israel since their association with the Mahomedans in later times.

twig of subja and a cup of wine or other liquor as a drink offering are all put into the dish, and then it is placed on a white clean sheet, besides which a censer is placed with frank-incense burning thereon. These and all other offerings are of course prepared with salt, as directed in the Levitical code. After this K e r i y a t h S h e m a was repeated about a dozen times. Now a days V e y i t e n l e k h a is repeated. After the ceremony is over, grace is said over the cup of wine or liquor, a little of which is poured on the ground as a libation, and the rest is drunk by the officiating reader and the person who makes the offering. Afterwards a handful of M a l i d a together with a piece of each of the articles kept in the dish is taken by the man who officiates as Priest into his own hands, and is presented to the person on whose account the offering is made, and also to those who fast along with him, saying that they are released from the vow. The Officiating minister then takes a piece of each of the articles for himself, as was done by the High Priest in olden times. The rest is shared by the people invited for the occasion, and then they all feast together. This offering is eaten on the same day that it is offered and is not kept for another day, in accordance with the directions given in the passage quoted above.

Sebah Shelamim (THE PEACE—OFFERING) :—This offering is made when a dispute is settled among the Bene-Israel, or when a person buys a house, a field or a garden. It is also called "a dish offered in the name of God." This is presented in the same way as the Thank-offering (Lev. VII 11—17). The peace-offering is eaten for two days, as directed in Lev. XIX 5—6.

Sebah Asham (THE GUILT-OFFERING). This offering is not made by the Bene-Israel in the mode enjoined by Lev. VII, 1—10, because they had neither temple, nor altar, nor High Priest.

Sebah Hatath (THE SIN-OFFERING) : — This offering is not made by the Bene-Israel for the same reasons as those given above.

Olah (THE BURNT-OFFERING):—This offering is not made by the Bene-Israel, for the same reasons. (Lev. chap. I. 10—17).

Korban Nedaba (THE VOLUNTARY OR FREE WILL OFFERING):— This offering is made by a Bene-Israel when a new house is built, or when his residence is changed. He then offers "a

Dish in the name of God". The dish contains almost the same articles as are used at the time of the Thank-Offering. As directed in Lev. VII 16, this offering is partaken of for two days. Nothing is allowed to remain till the third day.

Korban Neder (THE VOW-OFFERING):—This offering is made by a Bene-Israel when an object which he has had in view has been attained. This offering is also made in the same way as the Thank-Offering, and is eaten for two days. Nothing is suffered to remain for the third day. (Lev. VII. 16).

Korban Neser (THE OFFERING OF THE NAZARITE): — This offering is made when a Bene-Israel woman, who has no male issue for some ten or twelve years after marriage, takes a vow to the effect that if she is blessed with a son, she will keep him as a "Nazir" for 6 or 7 years; in other words that there shall come no razor upon his head until after the time mentioned in the vow. In the event of her obtaining a son, she keeps him as a Nazarite for the time specified in her vow, and then, after the completion of the period, the boy is taken in procession and brought to the door of a synagogue (in the absence of which, the ceremony is performed at home) where his hair is shaved off and weighed against gold or silver (according to the vow made by the woman). The sum of money realized in this way was formerly given in charity, but is now given to the synagogue. The shaved hair is thrown into the sea, and is not burnt as commanded in Num. VI. 18, as there is now no altar for doing so. On the occasion of consummating this vow, though a lamb for a burnt-offering, a ewe for a sin-offering and a ram for a Peace-Offering are required, the Bene-Israel kill goats instead of them, but do not burn any part of them. The parents of the boy, however, observe a fast on the day of this ceremony; while all other things are prepared as directed in Num. VI. In the evening as soon as the invited party comes to the appointed place, a clean white towel or a clean white sheet is spread on the floor, whereon a dish is placed, containing M a l i d a made of five pieces of unleavened bread of rice flour, which is besmeared with sweets, as well as twigs of subja, and five pieces of cooked liver of goat or lamb. Another dish containing cakes of fine wheaten flour mingled with and fried in oil (chappatis), and wafers of unleavened bread anointed

and fried in oil (Papud or Phenias) and pieces of the livers and gizzards of as many fowls as may have been killed on the occasion, along with a Meat-Offering (of rice) is also placed there. This dish also contains a cup of wine or liquor of some kind as a drink-offering, and several other plates filled with various sorts of fruit, and a censer with farnkincense burning thereon are placed over the sheet. Upon all these offerings K r i y a t h S h e m a used to be repeated about a dozen times; but now a days V e y i t e n l e k h a is repeated. After the ceremony is over the authorized officiant, or the father of the boy takes hold of the cup of wine or liquor and says grace over it, and pours a little on the ground as a libation, and the rest is drunk by the officiant and the father of the boy. Then a handful of M a l i d a together with a twig of subja and a piece of each of the articles placed there, are taken by the man who officiates as priest into his own hands, and before presenting the same to the woman who has made the vow, asks her for the reason of her taking that vow. On her giving the reason, she is told that she is free from her vow, and is presented with the articles by the officiant. The articles in the dishes and the plates are distributed among the party, with the exception of a few pieces of the liver and gizzards, as well as the 5 pieces of cakes and wafers, which are kept by the officiating minister for himself, as was done by the high priest in olden times; and the guests are served with the feast. This ceremony exactly corresponds to the Nazarite offering mentioned in Num. VI 14-21, except that the Bene-Israel do not sacrifice a lamb, goat or a fowl as a burnt offering, which they say cannot be done as they have neither temple nor altar. All the things that are prepared on the occasion are eaten during the day of the offering and on the day following it and nothing is permitted to remain till the third day, as is enjoined in Lev. VII, 16-17.

Korban Tehara. (THE OFFERING OF PURIFICATION) :— This offering is made on the occasion of the purification of a woman after child-birth, and takes place on the fortieth day in the case of a male child, and on the eightieth day in the case of a female child. This practice is another of those maintained among the Bene-Israel from time immemorial. On this occasion again a "dish is offered in the name of God". This dish contains M a l i d a of unleavened bread together with pieces of liver and gizzard of fowls killed on the

occasion. This is done as mentioned in Lev. XII.

Halla (DOUGH) :— As directed in Numbers XV 20-21, on Fridays and Festivals the Bene-Israel women after kneading the dough take off a small portion and put it in the fire as an offering to the Lord.

Shekalim :— As directed in Exodus XXX 12-16, it is customary among the Bene-Israel to take annually before the day of Atonement one Rupee as the equivalent of half a shekel from every man as a ransom for his soul unto the Lord. The rich are not permitted to give more, neither are the poor permitted to give less. In other offerings, howevere, men may give according to their abilities. The Jews think that if a man refuses to pay this tribute, he is not comprehended in the expiation.

Thus, out of eleven offerings, eight have been shewn to have existed amongst the Bene-Israel from time immemorial. The three offerings involving Burnt-Sacrifices have alone been omitted, and this clearly owing to the absence of the temple, the appointed altar and the celestial fire. It is indeed most surprising that the Bene-Israel women should have continued to make their meat offerings so punctiliously after the manner prescribed in Leviticus, although they retained none of their own scriptures. Three kinds of meat offerings are prescribed in Lev. II 4-7 as shewn below :—

(1) The meat-offering baken in the o v e n should be of unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or of unleavened wafers anointed with oil.

(2) The Meat-Offering baken in a p a n should be of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oid and p a r t e d i n p i e c e s.

(3) The Meat-Offering baken in the f r y i n g p a n should be of fine flour with oil.

Out of the three meat-offerings shewn above, the first one in the case of the Bene-Israel, is either made in a pan or in a frying pan, in consequence of their having had no ovens in their houses. It is also noticeable that the cakes are parted in pieces before they are put in the dishes as directed in the case of the second. From all this it is obvious that the ancestors of the first settlers of the Bene-Israel must have been in Palestine when these usages were in vogue there. Moreover we may invite attention here to the patent fact that, had

not the wives of the first Bene-Israel settlers been saved from the shipwreck as well as the men, all these fasts and feasts, rites and ceremonies, manners and customs, could never have been observed and kept intact for future generations, as they have been, for these domestic observances are specially within the province of the women. Alien women could never have been brought to attend accurately to the observance of these customs.

The fact which we have brought forward in support of our theory that the practice of making offerings among the Bene-Israel dates from time immemorial, is objected to by some of our Arabic Jewish brethren, who allege that similar offerings are in vogue among the Hindus, and that the Bene-Israel have adopted them from them. But as far as we know, these offerings were not and are not at all in practice among the Hindus of the Northern Konkan where the first Bene-Israel settlers took refuge, nor are they in vogue among the Hindus of other places. Even admitting for a moment that similar offerings could be shewn to have ever been or to be in vogue among Hindus, it would still remain to be shewn whether they ever were or are presented on occasions such as those mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures, and also whether they were or are prepared after the manner mentioned in the Holy Writ. Because some practice of making offerings had existed among gentile nations when a similar custom came into force among the Hebrews by Divine Command, could the conclusion at once be drawn that Moses had adopted the practice of making offerings from the Gentiles? It is a remarkable fact that although the Bene-Isreal were for centuries not in possession of their scriptures (for on our theory they lost them in the ship-wreck) on their arrival in India, yet they continued to present all these offerings as enjoined in the Bible. It is perhaps going too far to suggest that the Bene-Israel survivors of the ship-wreck may have been of the tribe of Levi and that therefore they remembered the different sorts of offerings so well, and yet we may mention in this connection that we recollect to have heard from old Bene-Israel men of the past generation that some of the Bene-Israel who were in the Military service of the Pant Sachew of the Bhor territory near Poona were enlisted as Abraham Levi, Isaac Levi, Jacob Levi, David Levi, Haskel Levi etc.. We cannot, however, lay much stress on this statement. At any rate the practice of making sacrificial offerings with

which they were well acquainted was handed down by the Bene-Israel from father to son, and the special merit of preserving these offerings, rites and ceremonies, and fasts and feasts which are found prevailing among the Bene-Israel to-day and of keeping the mode of their observance intact is to be attributed very largely to the religious punctiliousness of the Bene-Israel women, who handed them down from generation to generation with great exactitude. The very calendar of the Hebrew fasts and feasts, rites and ceremonies may be said to have been committed to memory by the Bene-Israel women, and it is owing to them principally that their religion has been preserved in he scrupulous and the exact way it has. They may not inaptly be designated the guardians of the Hebrew religion among the Bene-Israel.

Before concluding this chapter we should like to state one more argument in favour of the view we have taken above as to the time and mode of the arrival of the Bene-Israel on these shores.

Had the ancestors of the Bene-Israel come into India either from Yemen (Arabia Felix) as is supposed by Dr. Wilson, and by others who have mostly based their supposition on the authority of that learned Doctor, or from Aden, Muskat or the Persian Gulf as is surmised by the Bombay Gazetteer, they would not have strictly observed, down to the present date, the distincion between the real descendants of their original stock and the offspring of alien women through irregular connections; for this is no longer the practice prevalent among the Arabian and Persian Jews.

It may be permitted to add a few words descriptive of how the distinction between the "Black" and the "White" Bene-Israel is observed.

It is a well known fact that there are two sects or classes amongst the Bene-Israel, one of which is said to have sprung from the parent stock and is called Gora Israel (the "White" or real Bene-Israel) and the other is said to have sprung from Indian proselytes and the offspring of heathen women, and is the Kala (or "Black) Israel. The "Black" Israel of the present day try their utmost to eradicate this distinction, as will be seen by a refer-

ence to the correspondence published in a Marathi *) journal and from a pamphlet published in 1880 entitled "Reflections on the Caste Distinction among the Bene-Israel" by a member of the Bene-Israel community, the late Mr. Solomon Daniel N o w g o w k a r. Similar attempts have also been made in times past by that class, requesting the late Mr. David Samuel D i v e k a r, otherwise called Dada Commadan, Head-man of the community in Bombay, to do his best to have the distinction obliterated. Large and handsome donations were promised to the synagogue in the event of the request being complied with. After consulting the leading members of the community in Bombay and out stations, the head-man of the Community not only refused the request, but did not even allow those who had kept the heathenish women to wear the Talith, a ritual vestment or shawl used by the Bene-Israel at the time of prayer; but this prohibition has been done away with for the last 60 years. After the death of this head-man in 1846, his son Samuel David Divekar, otherwise called Babaji Commadan, succeeded him in the Office. He was in appearance a very handsome man and resembled very much the Jews from Jerusalem in features. He was also a wealthy man, and exercised great influence over the community; but when he attempted to introduce his own child, born from an alien woman as a real Bene-Israel by taking that child to a public feast to dine from the same dish with him and others, the Bene-Israel strongly objected to it. As soon as the child sat at the table, the whole party present on the occasion dispersed, being greatly indignant at this attempt to remove the anciently recognized distinction between the real Israel and Black or K a l a Israel.

There is no difference between the "black" and the "white" Israel so far as religious observances are concerned ; but inter-marriages and dining together are strictly prohibited. It should also be mentioned in connection with this subject that even the sanctified wine which is distributed after the service in Bene-Israel synagogues on Sabbaths and Holidays, was given to the Black Israel only when every body else had been previously served. The invidious

*) The Marathi journal called "Satya prakasha" or "The Light of Truth" vol II Nos. 16 and 17 pp. 29-36 and 87-88 respectively published in 1878-79 by the Bene-Israel.

distinction rankled deeply in their minds, and an agitation was set on foot in 1840 to do away with that practice. The injustice of allowing such a custom to continue having been made clear to the community, it was discontinued.

The distinction between the "Black" and the "White" Bene-Israel is not only observed by the Bene-Israel of the Bombay Presidency, but also amongst the Jews of Cochin, and is in accordance with the well-known precepts laid down by the sages Ezra and Nehemiah with the consent of the Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi and seventy of the Elders and almost all the people that were with them, (with the exception of a few dissenters who left them) as they were sufficiently convinced by past experience that intermarriages caused people to fall into the sin of idolatry. The History of such strictly preserved distinctions goes a long way to prove that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel were the descendants of those Hebrews who were in Palestine at the time of the Second Temple.

No marriages ever take place between the Bene-Israel and heathen women; but if such a woman has commerce with a Bene-Israel and if she seeks admission into the community, she is received after having been given T o b u t otherwise called T e b i l l a which means purification with water.

In conclusion we have to observe that in the face of such strong corroborative evidence in favour of the view we have taken of the time at which and the place whence the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came to India, we are not inclined to concur in the opinion of the late Dr. Wilson, given in his Appeal for the Christian Education of the Bene-Israel, that they have come from Yemen or Arabia Felix about 1200 years ago, on the ground that they have from time immemorial had such inter-course with this community of Jews and that they much resemble them in their bodily structure and appearance. The Editor of the B o m b a y G a z e t t e e r states that "the ancestors of the Bene-Israel have probably come either from Aden or from the Persian Gulf during the Sixth century" and adds that "in favour of an Arabian origin, there is said to be in their appearance some trace of Arab blood, they are said to use some Arab words, and there is the modern connection with Arab teachers.

On the other hand, the close trading connection of the Persian Gulf and India in the sixth century, and the fact that Jews bearing the surname of Bene-Israel are still found in Maskat, favour the descent of the Western Indian Bene-Israel from the Jews of Babylon." The grounds which the late Dr. Wilson and the Bombay Gazetteer have brought forward in support of their hypotheses will be found thoroughly investigated in our next chapter, and our readers will, we think, pronounce these grounds to be quite in-conclusive and devoid of support. In regard to the argument brought forward by the Gazetteer that Jews bearing the surname of Bene-Israel are to be found in Maskat, we refer our readers to what Dr. A. S. Jayaker, Civil Surgeon at Maskat, states in reply to our enquiries :— "There are no Jews at present living here, but there are a few at Sohar, about 130 miles to the North on the Coast. They have mostly come from Bushir for trade; none of them are natives of Sohar. They are called Jews by the Arabs, although they call themselves Bene-Israel, because they are the descendants of YAKOOB (Jacob). They do not know from what tribe they have descended. My informant, Ezra bin Suliman, belonging to the tribe of Levi, has originally come from Bushir and has lived at Sohar for the last five years. He tells me that excepting the members of the tribe to which he belongs, no Israelite in Baghdad, Busrah or Bushire knows the origin of his tribe. Their rites and ceremonies, however, are the same as described in the Torah (Pentateuch) and do not differ from those observed by other Jews in Northern Arabia. No approximate date can be given of their immigration into the Province. I am inclined to think they came from Persia and Northern Arabia. My informant is not aware of any tradition current among the Jews in Maskat as to any dispersion of their tribe to countries like India".

CHAPTER II

The Condition of the Ancestors of the Bene-Israel in Palestine and India.

So far we have endeavoured to show that the Bene-Israel are the direct descendants of the Hebrews who lived in Palestine about 2000 years ago. We would now deal with their past and present condition in India, taking notice of the criticisms of foreign writers. We will then give an account of a religious revival which took place under David Rahabi, and some arguments and medical opinions on the change in the appearance of the Bene-Israel, since these subjects have not as yet been adequately dealt with by any writer.

The ancestors of the Bene-Israel, there is ground to suppose, were in good circumstances when they started from their mother-country; for had it been otherwise, they would hardly have ventured on a hazardous voyage to a country like India, which though well-known to traders of that period, could hardly have been often visited by any of their countrymen "except *) perhaps in the by-gone times of King Solomon's reign, when his fleet sailed out of the harbour of Eziongeber to the Red Sea, which separates Palestine and Arabia from Egypt, Nubia and Abyssinia, and proceeded along the coast to the Gulf which washed the shores of Southern Arabia as far as the mouth of the Indus where "the land of Ophir" perhaps existed in the tract of country now called Sind". Many expeditions were sent out in ancient times by Greece and Rome to different countries for the purpose of colonization, and these expeditions being fitted out at the expense of the state, both rich and poor availed themselves of the opportunities of bettering their prospects by

*) English Edition of Graetz' History of the Jews Vol. I. p. 175.

migration. Such was not, however, the case with the Bene-Israel emigrants. They, at the period when we suppose them to have started, had neither any state to support them, nor was there any country to which they could look for assistance in times of danger. There is, therefore, little doubt that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel were sufficiently well off on their departure from their beloved mother country, either to buy or charter a ship for their voyage or to pay for their own passages.

The love of home is so deeply rooted in the human breast that none could ever think of severing all ties of kith and kin, unless compelled by dire necessity to do so. That such a necessity existed in the case of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel appears highly probable. We know that the lives and property of many were exposed to imminent danger at the time when we suppose the Bene-Israel to have left Palestine. It was no doubt with the aim of saving their lives and property that they left their mother-country and proceeded to other shores by a route by no means unknown to the merchant traders of those times. However, more evil was yet in store for them, and all their expectations were frustrated. The traditions of the Bene-Israel tell us that their ship was wrecked off Nawgaw. This wreck was due either to the violence of a furious storm, or to their ignorance of navigation along the Konkan Coast, which is unusually treacherous and rocky. Almost all the people were lost with all their belongings, and only seven pairs, seven men and seven women were saved. It might seem improbable at first sight that such a small number only should have survived, and yet that their descendants should have now multiplied to the number of ten thousand souls. But this tradition has been uniformly handed down from father to son among the Bene-Israel. Some on the other hand are surprised to find that the Bene-Israel number no more than ten thousand souls altough we suppose as many as 2000 years to have elapsed since their immigration. This may be readily ascribed to vicissitudes which have doubtless befallen them at various times subsequent to their arrival. They must frequently have had to endure privations of the worst type, such as famine and destitution. Epidemic such as Cholera, small-pox, etc., may have at times thinned their number. Besides these ordinary causes of distress, their houses were, there is no doubt, frequently pillaged and burnt

down, and their goods and chattels plundered by dacoits and subsequently by Pindaries and other robber tribes infesting the neighbourhood. Again, the tracts of contry where they resided were in later times frequently the scenes of petty warfare, and a large number of Bene-Israel probably lost their lives in the fights that ensued.

The sudden degradation of the Bene-Israel from the happy lot they had enjoyed in Palestine to the state of utter destitution caused by the ship-wreck, the removal of their residence from a comparatively cool climate like that of Palestine to the hot regions of India, the sudden transition to a life of poverty in the Indian Konkan, the change in their food from dainties to dry morsel, the removal from palatial buildings to wretched huts, the alteration in their dress from scarlet and crimson to rough country-made cloths, and the uneasiness caused by the dread of being killed or persecuted in a strange land, — all these circumstances tended to modify their complexion and physiognomy. Persons of good features are not, however, wanting among the Bene-Israel. In character and disposition they became in many ways changed, for, owing to fear of being killed or persecuted in a foreign land, they doubtless frequently had to behave towards those around them with abject humility. They were of course ignorant at first of the languages spoken in India and therefore at a disadvantage in trying to convince the people of their good intentions in coming to the country.

Having passed many days, as we may suppose, in a more or less destitute condition, they eventually became domesticated and took to the occupations of agriculture and oil-pressing which they had probably followed in their own mother-country. Staple commodities of export from Palestine in ancient times were, we know, oil and agricultural products, and the fact that the Bene-Israel settled in India as oil-pressers and agriculturists, is incidentally a collateral argument in support of their true Israelitish descent. Another of these collateral proofs is found in the fact that by their abstinence from work on the Sabbath, they distinguished themselves from all others around them. The natives of the Konkan, however, only took them for another of the several classes of oilmen already existing, and distinguished from each other by various epithets and characteristics, such as S o m w a r, S h u k e w a r, P a r d e s h i

and Lingayet (i.e. Monday, Friday and other) oilmen. The Friday or Shukerwar oil-men were first heard of after the advent of the Mohamedans. The main distinction between these oilmen and the Bene-Israel oil-pressers was that, although the former abstained from oill-pressing on Mondays and Fridays they nevertheless did not in any other respect regard these days as sacred, as the Bene-Israel did their Sabbath. The native oilmen kindled fire, cooked their food and were engaged in their daily household avocations on the days after which they were called; while the Bene-Israel abstained from work of every kind. They neither kindled fire, nor did they cook their food on the Sabbath, and on that day they ate bread which was prepared on the Friday, notwithstanding that it had become stale.

It must have been in order to divest themselves of even the minutest vestiges of peculiarity in the eyes of the Natives, that the Bene-Israel adopted Hindu names such as Alloba, Elloba, Etba, Dhonba, Sukoba, Raghoba, Gowroba, Dhurmia, Dhondia, Rowji, Abaji, Bawaji, Kummaji, Dadji, Tanaji, Bunduji, Dhumbaji, Ramaji, Ballaji, Bhikaji, Balkoji, Fakira, Dadwara, Nagwara, Eswara, Bapsha, Etton, Nuthu, Bapu etc.. The girls similarly were given Hindu names such as Hassu, Essu, Aka, Maka, Thaka, Saku, Pittu, Raju, Ranu, Gowri, Byna, Bunna, Ladi, Hali, Chinna, Ambai, Abaibai, Kaloobai, Dadibai, Sakabai, Ruttombai, Dhunabai, Sonabai, Shani, Dhakli, etc.. But the practice of taking Hindu names has now almost ceased. Even while using such names they at the same time retained also Biblical names, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Reuben, Simeon, Daniel, Ezekiel, Naphtali, Zebulun Samson, Eliezer, Pinhas, Sadik, Haeem, Samuel, Shalom, etc., and the Biblical names they gave to their girls were Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Sippora, or Zippora, Milka, Zilkha, Miriam, Hannah, Bath-sheba, Abigael, Segulla, Jochebed, Simha, etc., which were used only on occasions of religious rites and ceremonies. Again, sometimes they retained their Hebrew names in ordinary intercoruse with their gentile neighbours but in such cases usually made slight changes in them, to make them correspond with those of the Hindus. For instance Ezekiel was changed into Hassaji, Benjamin into Bunnaji, Abraham into Abaji, Samuel into Samaji, Elijah into Elloji, Isaac into Essaji, Joseph into Essobji, Moses into Mussaji, Rahamin into

Ramaji, David into Dawoodji, and Jacob into Akhoobji. The names Dinah and Esther were not in use formerly amongst the Bene-Israel, for the reason, no doubt, of the rape committed on the former by Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, whereas Esther was married to a Gentile, the Persian monarch Ahasveros. For these reasons some orthodox people still object to those names. The name Judah also was not in favour among the Bene-Israel, owing probably to the grudge which the ten tribes of Israel bore towards the tribe of Judah. Now, however, they do not object to these names. The fact that they adopted some of the harmless and innocent local customs, — foreign, it is true, to Judaism, but yet not savouring in the smallest degree of an idolatrous tendency, — thus adapting themselves in matters indifferent to the practices of their neighbours (in fact much as the inhabitants of Judea had adopted some of the Grecian customs in Palestine) also contributed towards disarming suspicion about them. Had the ancestors of the Bene-Israel not devised this plan and either themselves adopted the name of Shanwar Telis (Saturday Oilmen) or led others so to style them from the occupation they would probably have run the risk of being exterminated. Their prudence and foresight in this matter cannot but command one's admiration.

In course of time, as their number increased, the Bene-Israel spread more or less all over the Northern Konkan, including Janjira, which was then under the Bahamani Kings. They chose surnames for their families from the towns and villages where they came to reside, e.g. men who resided in Kehim called themselves Kehimkar, those who lived at Penn called themselves Penkar, etc. *) This mode of taking surnames is not an innovation, for we have similar instances in our Scriptures. Elija the Prophet, for example, is surnamed the Tishbite, **) from Tishbi, a town in Naphtali. Jesse the Beth-le-

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*) But such names as Agaskar, Korgavkar, Punekar, Nagarkar, as mentioned by the Bombay Gazetteer at foot note of page 529 of Vol. XVIII are not to be found among the Bene-Israel, as they never settled in former times at those places, which are situated on the Ghats.

**) I Kings, XVII. 1.

hemite, ***)Shamai the Harodite, †) Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkhesh the Takoite †) etc. Nor is the adoption of surnames by the Bene-Israel according to the names of towns, cities and villages, peculiar to themsleves even in modern times; for the Jews of Italy have mostly taken names of Cities: e.g. Modena, Pisa, etc. This custom has also been adopted by Jews in Germany; Kalisch, Worms, Oppenheim, Berliner, Danziger, etc. The white Jews of Cochin on the Malabar Coast have also surnames taken from known localities, such as Halegoa, Rahabi, Mizrahi, Zakai, Rottenberg, Ashkenazi, Tuffa, Zebib, Kindil, Shurrabi, Ashuri, Tumborek, Sargon, etc.

The Bene-Israel on reaching India seem to have retained no copies of the Scrolls of the Law or Synagogue Liturgies (if there were any of the latter extant at the time); a fact which may be attributed to the ship-wreck of their ancestors. It would therefore be natural that they should shortly forget the different Hebrew prayers, and that they only retained rememberance of Keriyath Shema, i.e. the great Hebrew formula : Hear O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one Lord. This they repeated on every religious occasion, such as that of circumcision, marriage, funeral obesquies etc., until the time when after the lapse of centuries they once more received religious instrutions from their co-religionists of other countries. Notwithstanding, however, this protracted period of benightedness, the original Bene-ısrael settlers and their descendants do not seem to have forgotten the covenant of Circumcision and the essential doctrine of the Unity of the God-head, nor was their confidence in God ever shaken. While they were in this state one by name David Rahabi is said to have come to India, and the date of his arrival is placed by some as early as 900 years ago; while others say that he came about 500 years ago; but the Bombay Gazetteer differs from these two dates and places it only 200 years back. It is, however, clear *) that he came to the Konkan at one time or another, and effected a religious revival amongst the Bene-Israel. From his surname it seems natural to infer that he must have come here

***) 1 Sam., XVI. 1.

†) II Sam., XXIII, 24-39.

*) What documents or references are there to prove the historicity of this David Rahabi?? (I.O.).

from Egypt; for, the word Rahab is poetically used to designate that country. (Psalms LXXXVII. 4. LXXXIX. 10. Isa: LI. 9.). Members of a family with the surname Rahabi are found in Cochin on the Malabar Coast at the present time. It would only be natural to expect to find in David Rahabi in addition to his keen desire for the amelioration and intellectual elevation of his co-religionists. steeped as they were in religious ignorance about that time, a specially sympahetic interest in them on the very ground of the Egyptian experiences cmmon to them both; for, as previously mentioned, the Bene-Israel also probably came through Egypt. When he came among them, he found that their customs, manners, religious rites and ceremonies were still largely correspondent with those of the Hebrews. Though they did not remember the particular portion of the Hebrew liturgy that was to be repeated on the occasion of any particular holiday, rite or ceremony, they still went through the various acts and observances that used to be performed on these occasions.

Although David Rahabi was convinced that the Bene-Israel were the real descendants of the Hebrews, he still wanted to test them further. He therefore, it is said, gave their women clean and unclean fish to be cooked together; but they promptly singled out the clean fish from the unclean ones, saying that they never used fish that had neither fins nor scales. Being thus satisfied, he began to teach them systematically the tenets of the Hebrew religion. He taught Hebrew reading and writing, without translation, to three Bene-Israel young men from the Jhiratkar, Shapurkar and Rajpurkar families *). Thence forward all ceremonies were performed in accordance with the authorized Hebrew ritual, and the irregular repetition of the K e r i y a t h S h e m a was done away with; the K e t u b a (marriage bond) was also introduced about this time. David Rahabi alone had a copy of the liturgy and scriptures; consequently every prayer that was required to be said at the time of ceremonies was read from the manuscripts which his disciples had copied from his book. It is not rare even now to meet with manuscripts of such kind. Unfortunately David Rahabi was, it is said, killed by a local chief two or three years after the commencement

*)How can this statement be substantiated? (I. O.).

of his good work amongst the Bene-Israel; and it is said that his grave is in the village called Sarul near Alibag. After his death. the young men mentioned above, who had been his disciples, officiated as Kajis, and performed religious rites and ceremonies among the Bene-Israel. They received fees for the performances of these rites and ceremonies. The recognition of their rights as Kajis was not at first accorded by the then existing local Governments to their descendants, and they had to apply for permission to enforce their privileges. The families of Jhiratkar, Shapurkar and Rajpurkar received Sanads*) to act as Kajis at first from the Mogul rulers and then from the chiefs of Angria and of Janjira. The Sanads that we now find in their possession are of recent date, the old ones having been renewed. We have not seen the Sanad in the possession of the Shapurkar family, but there is no doubt that the members of this family were Kajis, for their names are included among the Plaintiffs in the suit filed for establishing their rights and privileges as Kajis against a small portion of the Bene-Israel residents of Alibag. The Sanad of the Jhiratkar family was some time back forwarded to the Sudder Dewance Adawlut, now the High Court of Bombay Appellate side, with some other papers, in the matter of the Appeal against the decision of the District Judge of Alibag on a suit filed in 1854 by the Kaji against the Bene-Israel of Alibag for the enforcement of his claims as Kaji. It remained in the High Court and never came back to its owner. We applied to the Acting Registrar of the High Court Bombay on the 11th January 1886 for the copy of this Sanad as well as for that of the decision of the court in that case, but we did not receive them. The Plaintiffs in this case were Shalom and David Banaji Jhiratkar Kaji, residing at Ambepur in the Taluka of Revadenda, David Samson Shapurkar Kaji, residing at Thall in the Taluka of Underi, Bapuji Essaji Jhiratkar Kaji residing at Alibag, and Isaac Benjamin Shapurkar Kaji residing at Poynad; and the defendants were Reuben Bowaji Churrikar Naik, David Samuel Wakrulkar, Bhawoo Abaji

*) A Sanad is a government document or warrant conveying a privilege or an authorization or faculty for something to be done.

Ghoslkar Subedar, Jacob Killakar Subedar. Gowroji Abraham Pingley Havildar David Solomon Mhedekar, Abun Balkoji Sabajkar, Samuel Joseph and Benjamin Samuel Wakrulkar residing at Alibag. The date on the latest Sanad of the Jhiratkar family which authorized them to act as Kajis was 1770 of the Christian Era. The decision of the Sudder Adawlut was not in favour of the Kajis. It is, however, evident from the translation of a Marathi writing, given below issued in favour of the Jhiratkars by Raghoji Angria the chief of Alibag, that they were in possession of a Sanad, conferring upon them the hereditary rights of acting as Kajis to the Bene-Israel of the Konkan :—

> Respectfully presented at the feet of His Majesty Raja Shahu by Raghoji Angre son of Manaji the Commander of the forces and the head of the ministry.

An order. Form the most powerful in all matters of state administration, the Ocean of confidence, the Commander of the Forces, the head of Ministry, the illustrious Raghoji Angre, respected by Kings, to Elloji bin Musaji Israel Teli (oil-man) Jhiratkar, in the Sur year one thousand two hundred and thirty two (1831-32). An order has been given to the following effect : You having personally come to our presence in the island of Kolaba, made a representation to the following effect :— "My share in the Vatan *) of Kajiship of the Israel Telis (oilmen), in the district of Cheul, has been enjoyed by my kinsman Shalom bin Bunaji, the reason whereof is as follows :— Formerly in consequence of family disputes, the Vatan was under Government confiscation and in the Sur year eleven hundred and ninety six (1795-96) a moiety of the share was, during my absence, redeemed by the Shapurkars, and the other moiety by the ancestors of Shalom, by presenting a petition to Government and by expending a sum of money in Nazranas (presents) etc.; since which time, the moiety of he share belonging to the Shapurkars has been enjoyed by the Shapurkars, and the other moiety of the share has been enjoyed by Shalom and his ancestors. I and my brothers etc., the owners of

*) An hereditary estate.

this moiety were not present on the occasion. I am now desirous of having my share of the Vatan, on paying my portion of the expense. Your Highness will be pleased to institute an inquiry into the matter, and to grant my share to me." Whereupon an inquiry having been made into the matter and the genealogy of the parties having been taken into consideration, and it having been decided, that you are a rightful co-partner in Shalom's moiety, you are made to pay to Shalom a sum of money, the particulars of which are as follows :—

The total amount of expense in ready cash to redeem the Vatan, Nazar (presents) on account of the grant of eleven hundred and ninety six (1795-96).

To the Angré Government Ruppees — — —	160
To the Peshwa Government Rupees — — —	60
	220
Court expenses of two Governments, about Rupees	40
Rupees — —	260
From which deduct (the share of the) Shapurkar holder of the moiety of the Vatan, Rupees — — —	130
The three shares in the moiety having been redeemed by the ancestors of Shalom, the whole of the Vatan has been enjoyed by Shalom only; but the owners of the two shares are absent. When they will come, they will make a demand on Shalom for their two shares. Therefore the estimated amount of the expense incurred on account of the share, calculated on the two shares is Rupees —	87
	217
The remaining one share belonging to Shalom amounts to Rupees — — — — — —	43
	260

of a moiety of which, you are the owner. The net amount of the share of expense that fall to your share is Rupees 21—8—0. The principal amount of the above mentioned Rupees twenty one and half, which you have been made to pay to Shalom and your share of the income for thirty six years, appro-

priated by Shalom to his own use, has been set against the amount of interest due to him for services performed by him. Having passed a decision to this effect, and having received from you Rupees 100 as a Nazrana (present), your share of the above mentioned Vatan being a sixth of the whole Vatan, which was enjoyed by Shalom, has been made over to you. Therefore you are to enjoy the same in the same manner as it has been enjoyed from time immemorial and live a happy life. May this be known. Sealed this 19th day of Rabelaval (28 August 1831).

The following are the translations of the Sanads which the Rajpurkars obtained from the Hubshi King and the Peshwa:—

A Sanad granted by the Valiant King Yakut-Khan Bahadur, the protector of subjects.

Be it known from this day to the past, present and future Deshmooks, Deshpandays and Land lords living within the jurisdiction of the chief town of Rajpuri and the palace at Yakutnagar in the Sur year Suma Tisa Arbain Mayaten and Allaff (1240, i.e. 1840 A.D.) that Yacob Elloji and his brothers Saturday oilmen inhabitants of the village Khursai in the district of Mhuslay came in person and handed in a petition to the effect that their hereditary rights as Kajis had been withheld from them for three years although they were in possession of a Sanad granted in the name of their ancestors, Kaji Ebrahim Yacob and Dawud Essub, Shanwar Telis inhabitants of the said Rajpuri, and bearing the date of 17th Shaban of the year Tisa Saben Maya and Allaff i.e. 1170 corresponding to the year 1770 of the Christian Era. This Sanad standing in the names of the two persons aforsaid has been brought and presented before me, and as it has become very old, they have requested me to renew the same and to restore them their rights as Kajis. Having duly considered their Petition, His Majesty has come to this decision; that the Shanwar Telis herein before-named are legally entitled to enjoy the inheritance of the rights and privileges as Kajis on the said Yacob Elloji and his brothers, and has renewed the Sanad duly sealed. It is hereby proclaimed that all marriage ceremonies, domestic convivialities and funeral rites should be conducted and performed by Kajis agreeably to former rules, and that any caste dispute should be settled by them. It is also

proclaimed that the Kajis should be duly honoured and respected as before and that the Kajis living wihin the jurisdiction of the Hubshi territory should be allowed to hold and enjoy whatever rights and privileges they may have had in their possession before, and that whenever they build a house they should be provided with gratuitous labour (i.e. the labourers employed by them should not ask for any remuneration). Further they should not be obliged to have their Sanad renewed every year. A copy of this edict should be kept at the Royal palace and the original should be kept in the possession of the Kajis for their enjoyment.

The hereditary rights of the Kajis should on no account be interfered with and should be continued from father to son and from generation to generation. All should obey this order. This Sanad is granted by Mahomed Ayub Mahomed Jaffer. Witness Yesji Ramaji Naik Kala Afrad — 5th Moon of Rabilaval — Date of despatch idem — Signed Tukaji Sabashiv.

Sanad by the officers of the Peshwa Government.

This "Deed of Assurance" is granted by Govindrao Mankar and Chimaji Mankar Subedars of the district of Rajpuri to Abraham Kaji and Dawud Kaji Saturday oilmen, residents of the said Rajpuri in the year 1770; your rights as Kajis of Saturday oilmen have been recognized by the Government of Janjira, but they have not been recognized beyond the village of Mahsra by this Government. On being brought to the district of Talagad you have been hindered from exercising your rights as such Kajis, hence all the Saturday oilmen of the said district interceded in your behalf and have requested us to be pleased to allow you to exercise your rights as Kajis, for the performance of their ceremonies has been obstructed. We have therefore been pleased to grant you this deed of title authorizing you to come to the district without any hesitation, and to exercise uninterruptedly your rights and privileges as Kajis among the Saturday oilmen. 14th Moon Shaban the first half.

The new Sanad granted to the ancestors of Kaji Ebrahim Yacob and Dawud Essoob, Saturday oilmen, residents of the district of Rajpuri, is dated the 17th of Shaban Ridanand Tisa Suben Maya and Allaff (1170 — 1770 A.D.), as the old Sanad granted to them had been lost in a rebellion."

These Kajis had authority superrior to that of the Hazans who

were appointed as readers in synagogues in later times. The Kaji had jurisdiction both as chief priest and judge, and decided in olden times all the disputes that arose in the community, with the aid of four or five councillors. This institution seems to conform to the Mosaic practice though the term is of Mohamedan origin, and was probably borrowed from the Mahomedans after the death of David Rahabi. The Kajis have now ceased to hold any authority in the community, on account of their ignorance in matters religious and secular, and of their want of zeal in maintaining the Hebrew religion among their flocks. The little improvement made by David Rahabi and his disciples lasted long; but the weak and fickle minded people fell into disorder in later times, when some of the Bene-Israel adopted the reprehensible custom of keeping heathenish women as concubines, which led them into idolatrous practices (in which case, however, as elsewhere described, the offsprings were carefully kept distinct from the community). There were, however, many families which clung very tenaciously and zealously to the faith of their forefathers to its very spirit and letter, and did not bow before the strange gods, like those "7,000 Israelites who had not bowed their knees to Baal, and whose mouths had not kissed him" in the time of Elijah the Prophet.

While the Bene-Israel were in this depressed condition, it is not impossible that the Arabian or Yemen Jews, as stated by Dr. Wilson, may have visited them; but if they did so, it was not with the intention of bringing about a religious revival among them. for the recent revival of religion among the Bene-Israel is solely to be ascribed to the efforts of the white Jews from Cochin in Malabar. The Arabic Jews, on the other hand, came for the purpose of extorting money from the ignorant Bene-Israel, under the pretence of being servants of God and messangers from the Holy Land. We will give a few illustrations tending to show what amount of sympathy the Jews of Yemen in Arabia felt towards the Bene-Israel. The importance of these incidents as showing the attitude of the Arabian Jewish communiy towards that of the Bene-Israel, and consequently the bearing of the matter upon the theory advanced by Dr. Wilson of the derivation of the latter from the former must be our apology for introducing accounts that may seem invidious.

It is said that after the death of David Rahabi an Arabian Jew

happened to visit the Bene-Israel in the Konkan at a time when they were in total ignorance of their religion during the month of Ashad or Tamuz which commences about the 17th of June. He asked them for charity. On being informed that his request could not be complied with until the Darfalnicha San (i.e. the Day of Atonement which came off in Ashwin or Tishree) had been over, the Jew hit upon a stratagem and said that they had forgotten their religion, since the holiday came off on the seventeenth of that month and not on the 10th of Tishree as affirmed by them. They were at a loss to know what they should do, but they thought it was not unlikely that they themselves might be under a mistake, and the more so since a man, who had shown himself so proficient in the knowledge of their Scriptures as their visitor had done, must surely be right. Taking him at his word therefore, they met together to pray with the necessary preparations. Another Jew from Yemen who came for a similar purpose on that day, was surprised to see them engaged in reading the Service of Kippur (or the Day of Atonement) in the month of Tamuz. He opened his prayer book and pretending to pray entered into the following colloquy with the other Arabic Jew in Hebrew :—

— „„ אני לא ראיתי שבעה עשר בתמוז כפורים כפורים"
„החכם שתוק שתוק כי כולם חמורים חמורים,
הצי שלי וחצי שלך מאשר נתנו לי זהובים
אל מלך יושב על כסא רחמים :"

i.e. "I have never seen the Day of Atonement falling on the seventeenth of Tamuz." The other rejoined, "Please keep quiet, they are all fools. We will divide equally between ourselves all that we shall get from them." The other man followed the example of his coutryman and recited the prayer of Kippur. *) The

*) This is a well known Jewish anecdote. (Cf. Immanuel Olsvanger, Rosinkes mit Mandlen, Verlag der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft fuer Volkskunde, 2nd. edition, Basel, 1931, No. 347, p. 230f). The text of the song runs there as follows.

באתי לכאן וראיתי שהם כולם בורים,
ואמרתי להם שהיום יום הכפורים ! קדוש !
עשרה רובל נתנו לי,

artful stratagem employed by the two Jews at the expense of the simple minded Bene-Israel became known to them only when the two former quarrelled as to their respective shares.

We will give another instance of a case in which an Arabian Jew acted unscrupulously by offering the Sacrifice of a goat with the object of obtaining money, in total disregard of the direct command of the Lord God of Israel that no sacrifice should be offered in any place except the Temple at Jerusalem (Deut: XII 5-15.XVI 5.6.). In about 1832—33 when there was no rain in some parts of the Konkan, one of the Yemen Jews, by name Judah and surnamed Shukur Gemal prevailed upon about 200 Bene-Israel from Alibag, Revadanda, Ambepur, Borlai and other surrounding villages to join together in offering prayers for rain. At the request of a wealthy and influential Bene-Israel, Tanaji Bapuji Dhokerkar, they met together and offered a goat on the Hill of Charattee near Pazur in Revadanda for rain. After the goat was killed, the Arabian Jew took the fat that covered the bowels, the two kidneys and the fat that was upon them which was by the flanks and the great lobe of the liver and removed them to a ditch which had been dug at some distance and filled it with cinders. This being done, he washed himself, put on clean and white clothes, took the articles of offering in his hands and threw them into the fire. While doing so, he read some portion from the Hebrew liturgy and some portions of the Psalms of David and wept all the while. At this time the congregation stood at some distance from the

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חצי שלך וחצי שלי !

היום בכאן ומחר ויברח ! קדוש !

Another, Galician, version of the song has been communicated to us by the famous Hebrew author S. Agnon of Jerusalem :

שלום עליכם, ר' חיים !

אני אמרתי להם : יום הכפורים היום,

והם נתנו לי אלף שקל ומאתים !

חצי שלי וחצי שלך,

ביום מחר ויברח ! קדוש !

The meaning of all these songs is more or less the same, the song being a parody of one of the Yom-Kippur prayers (I. O.).

ditch, no one being allowed to go near it. As soon as the sacrifice was over, he came to the congregation and recited V e y i te n l e k h a (i.e. the verses of blessing). Strange to say, by the time the sacrifice was over and all the congregaion had taken their dinner, there were good showers of rain. All the expenses of this ceremony were borne by the wealthy Bene-Israel, and the Yemen Jew who performed it was very handsomely remunerated. The same man offered a similar sacrifice on a hillock called Shinotee near Borlai, a village in the Hubshi territory, some three or four years later when again no rain had fallen in that district. He acted on the well-known Hindustani proverb : "Esa peer, Musa peer, Subse bada Paysa peer" ("money is a greater saint than Jesus and Moses").

Quite lately some unkindly-disposed Arabian Jews made an allegation that pure Jewish blood does not flow in the veins of the Bene-Israel. It was published in two issues, dated the 7th February and the 11h of May 1883 respectively, of the J e w i s h C h r o n i c l e a weekly paper printed in London, and in refutation of which we sent the following letter dated the 7th June 1883. It was published in extenso in the issue of the 6th July 1883, and is introduced here with only a few alterations;—

"You term the Arab Jews pure and proper Jews, while the Bene-Israel you term impure and improper Jews, owing to a custom having prevailed, as is alleged, among the latter, of marrying Hindu women, and thereby you say, they have lost caste in the sight of the former. Now if your opinions are founded merely on the beliefs of the A r a b J e w s, you will yourself admit that they rest on a one-sided and vague statement, and that it is clearly desirable to inquire into the real state of the case. By clearing the ground on this point, you will not only take away the unjust odium incurred by the community in the eyes of their more favourably circumstanced co-religionists, but you will also draw closer the ties of brotherhood between these two communities which have not hitherto been very strong. Since the importance of the question is quite apparent, I feel it my bounden duty to take up the cause of the community in which I have been acting for so many years, and consequently can claim to speak with some authority on this subject. Speaking from my own personal knowledge, I may say that the allegation is utterly unfounded. In the first blace, after the advent of the Bene-

Israel in India, the natives of the country can hardly have quietly received them. They must have considered their manners and languages strange; and even when the Indian languages *) became the native tongues of the Bene-Israel, a primary barrier to their assimilation with those around them would have been the conviction of the natives that even the touch or shadow of the former was a pollution to themselves; and, secondly, there would have been the anxiety on the part of the Bene-Israel to adhere to their religious principles. Thus, even in the absence of any such strong repulsive forces as those arising out of religious sentiments, permanent union on the part either of Natives or Bene-Israel was simply impossible In the second place, if the charge had contained a shadow of truth in it, the distinction observed by the Bene-Israel themselves between pure and impure Jews would be without any explanation whatever. This distinction is so rigidly observed that the pure Bene-Israel (that is those who are of genuine blood through both father and mother) neither intermarry nor dine with the "Black"' Jews.

"Though the Bene-Israel community is illiterate, nevertheless profligacy and other sensual abominations are considered generally the grossests sins possible, by both men and women. The state of morals amongst the Bene-Israel you will yourself be able to judge from the fact that out of a population of some ten or twelve thousand souls not one Bene-Israel woman in the whole of the Bombay Presidency is found to be a public disgrace to her sex. It is true that the very existence of "Black" Jews shows hat the state of morality was once lower than it is now. But this does not prove that actual marriages took place between Bene-Israel and Hindus. Nor is there any evidence to support this view. Formerly there were formed illicit unions, either temporary or permanent; but never by marriage, and the offsprings of these unions were at once distinguished as "Black" Jews. If by the mere fact of this circumstance, the whole of the community loses its genuineness of origin, each and every other Jewish community must be held impure in its blood, because in every community there will be found men and women whose moral conduct will not be above suspicion. Among the Bene-Israel bachelors do not marry widows even of their own community, and it

*) i.e. Marathi and Hindustani (I. O.).

therefore seems highly improbable that they would ever form permanent marriage connections with Hindu women. If the Bene-Israel have lost caste in the sight of "Pure Jews", it is difficult to understand how there could have existed the close communion there did between the Bene-Israel and the Mesopotamian Jews, when the latter came to settle in Bombay for commercial purposes. Nay, the communion between them was so strong that the latter had for some time no other place of resort than the kindly homes of the former. They received their religious privileges also in the synagogue of the Bene-Israel, and buried their dead in the Bene-Israel cemeteries. where the sepulchres of the late Ezekiel Abraham surnamed Abdul Nubbee, grandfather-in-law of Mr. Reuben David Sassoon; Sillamon Yacob, the first rich man in Bombay and his daughter, one Cohen and a Shaliach (messanger) from Jerusalem by name Meyer Michael and many others are still to be found. If it be perhaps said that the Arab or Baghdad Jews were not then so intimately acquainted with the social condition of the Bene-Israel as they are now, it is impossible that such an objection can stand for a moment, because the allegation is flatly contradicted by what has been admitted and stated by the better-informed of the Bagdadi Jewish community themselves. It will be seen from the remarks made by the Honourable Solomon David Sassoon at the second annual Prize distribution of the Israelite School of the Anglo-Jewish Association, published in the Second Annual School Report, that "it is to be ascribed to the fact of the Hebrew and religious education having been neglected and being almost a thing unknown in the Bene-Israel community, and to the consequent ignorance and carelessness about the important religious observances which came to prevail which appear to have led foreigners to the incorrect impression that the Bene-Israel had assimilated themselves with the Natives of India". In your issue of the 11th May last, you take notice of the Annual Report of this School which contains the above remark, and it seems a little surprising how you could have over-looked it and written in the same issue the following sentence : "If the blood in their veins be not as pure as that of their Jewish countrymen of Arabic origin, they are more interesting to their English co-religionists, owing to their having lived from times immemorial in our vast Indian Empire".

"You will yourself be able to judge how proud they are of their brethren-in-faith from the fact that they distribute, poor as they are, about Rupees 25 a month among their needy Arabic-speaking brethren. Besides, they meet calls for pecuniary help even from the Holy Land. A still stronger proof that they have not assimilatet themselves with the natives of India, is afforded by the fact that a Bene-Israel dislikes begging at the door even of his own co-religionists; and therefore a Benevolent Society has been in existence here for the last 60 years for supporting poverty stricken Bene-Israel. Foreign writers, such as the late Dr. Wilson, have been fully satisfied that the Bene-Israel have in them Abrahamic blood (though the latter thinks that centuries ago it became mixed with Arabic blood). The opinion that the Bene-Israel are true Hebrews in origin is expressed by the traveller Saphir and by Benjamin II in his work called Mitzvot Israel.

"I think I have adduced sufficient evidence in refutation of the gross calumny that has been actively circulated. I say gross calumny, because it is looked upon by the community as such. Your first remark did not attract as much attention as your recent remarks have done. They have gone a great way to create dissatisfaction in the community, and may endanger the good work which the Anglo-Jewish Association has undertaken with a view to bring about the union of the Jews in the various quarters of the globe, unless you either subsantiate or withdraw the remarks which have found place in different issues of your paper."

The following was the remark made by the editor of the paper on the letter given above.

"Our correspondent in his warm advocacy of the purity of the blood of the Bene-Israel, places a construction upon our remarks which is entirely unwarranted and which we repudiate. We have always regarded with genuine interest and satisfaction the efforts made to bring about close relations between the Bene-Israel and their brethren-in-faith. It is a matter of history that it was owing to our advocacy of their cause that the Anglo-Jewish Association was induced to take those active steps in their behalf which have proved so fruitful of excellent results to the Bene-Israel. Our remarks were founded upon statements publicly made. But we believe that the view of our correspondent is the more correct. The most recent

auhority on the subject, the Encyclopœdia Brittanica", distinguishes the Bene-Israel as a race from Kala Israel, the mixed multitude of proselytes".

It is a well-known saying that among no nation do we find the feeling of brotherhood so powerful as among the Hebrew race. At the sound of the magic word "Israel", distances are forgotten, all differences of colour, language and custome are merged, and the idea of the community of origin joins all hearts together. This community of feeling has ever been markedly present among the Bene-Israel, and now prevails in an undiminished degree. We must further say that it was nothing short of this tie of brotherly affection which impelled the ancestors of the Bene-Israel to afford not only shelter but hospitable and cordial reception to their Arabic speaking brethren when they came to settle in Bombay for commercial purposes, at a time when voyages were committed in the island by plunderers, assassins and pirates, to whom the Bene-Israel, then forming an important element in the standing army, were a terror. By this deed of sympathy the Bene-Israel acted on the principle that in heart as well as by birth they were of the pure blood of Israel. A misleading report was made to Mr. Edward D. Stern, a member of the council of the Anglo-Jewish Association of London when he came on a visit to India in the month of March 1885. The report was to the effect that many of the Bene-Israel parents had idols hidden in their houses. But we are glad to state that this report was, under date the 15th May 1885, contradicted by an Indian Bene-Israel, the late Mr. Moses Abraham Awaskar B.A., B.C.L., while studying at Oxford. The refutation of the statement is published in the issue of the Jewish Chronicle of the 22nd May 1885 and runs as follows :—

"When I glanced at your last issue containing the report of the monthly proceedings of the Anglo-Jewish Association, I was somewhat startled at the two following statements concerning the Bene-Israel of Bombay.

(1) The children attending the Association School were black and hardly distinguishable from the Hindus.

(2) Many of their parents also had idols hidden in their houses.

"That the children were not distiguishable from the Hindus is not to be wondered at, considering the length of time they sojourned

in India. As to the fact of their being black, I beg to point out that there are degrees even in blackness; I admit, however, that it is difficult to notice the different shades. It requires a good deal of experience to change the first impression made on the mind of a casual visitor; and that is just the point. Any one who has stayed in India and got used to the Indian faces, will admit that a good deal of Jewish physiognomy is to be recognized in the children of the Bene-Israel of Bombay, while even among the swarthy Indians generally, some are (comparatively of course) fair and some black.

"The statement only amuses me, because the mistake, after all, is natural. My first year in England was not enough to convince me tha all English faces are not alike, and that fair (white) as they all are, some of them are supposed to be dark. But now, even I am gaining experinece, and dark (black I suppose) as I am, know who amongst the Albions are fair and who dark.

"Although the minds of the Bene-Israel are imbued with superstition, and they pertinaciously cling to the idolaterous customs, I cannot but flatly contradict the statement that the parents had idols hidden in their houses, no matter from what source, and from what quarter the oriental traveller received the information. I regret the painful duty of contradiction, at the same time I am glad to have the opportunity to show that the Bene-Israel of Bombay do not worship the idols that are hidden. If so, Idols of whom, where, in what way, and why hide them, if they are to be worshipped? All manner of religions and sects are tolerated in India under the British rule. I am afraid the piece of intelligence was conveyed by some ignorant, inaccurate guide".

Before we finish this portion of our evidence regarding the want of sympahy shown among the Arabic-sepaking Jews for the Bene-Israel, we should like to give a fourth and the last instance. We give below an extract from the issue of the 15th May 1885 of the Jewish Chronicle:—

"The small Jewish Colony at Znazibar, owing to the extension of commerce with that African country, has within recent months received a slight accretion to its numbers. Dr. Gregory d'Arbella, the Jewish physician to the Sultan of Zanzibar, mentions that that colony now consists of seven Europeans, more than a dozen of the Bene-Israel from India and two or three Arab Jews from Aden.

The Jewish residents are sufficiently numerous to form a congregation but this is as yet impossible, owing to the difference between the rites of the Ashkenazim and the Sepharadim, which are still very marked in the East, and partly also owing to the unfriendly attitude observed by Arab Jews of the pure type towards the Bene-Israel whom they regard as half-caste".

We shall prove that the allegation made by the Arab Jews in these articles that the Bene-Israel are halfcaste, is utterly without any basis, if the following facts are considered;—

First, a research into the former history of the Bene-Israel would doubtless warrant us in saying that when they migrated into India, they did not immediately suffer any religious persecution from the natives of that country. Secondly, social intercourse between the Hindus and the Bene-Israel was prevented, owing to several reasons. Foremost among them was the fact that the Hindus regarded it a pollution to touch a M l e n c h a or a man of different religion; and the Bene-Israel of course were included in the class of M l e n - c h a. Intercourse with alien women could not be encouraged by the Bene-Israetl themselves as they were strictly prohibited by their Sages and Scriptures to take gentile women or to cohabit with them. If it be a fact, as we contend, that the Bene-Israel kept themsleves aloof from all the races which constituted the natives of India, we believe that no man of common sense would maintain even for a moment that the Bene-Israel are a half-caste race, as asserted by the Arabic-speaking Jews.

Though there still live many rich Jews from Baghdad in Bombay, they have never as a community done any thing for the religious or educational welfare of the Bene-Israel. It is only the late Honorable S o l o m o n D a v i d S a s s o o n and his nefew Mr. J a c o b E. D. S a s s o o n that have of late years shown the nobleness of their family and the magnanimity of their mind in studying the welfare of the Bene-Israel, and have hereby set an excellent example to their country-men, who, we trust, will now take it to heart, and follow in their foot steps.

Were we to pass our opinion on the moral conduct of the Bene-Israel women, it would be called in question since it comes from one who is a member of the Bene-Israel communnity. We should therefore like to place before our readrs what a Christian Clergy-

man has published in corroboration of our assertion. The Rev. J. H. Lord has published in the issue of January 1885 of the Bombay Diocesan Record the following, which was also copied verbatim in the issue of the Bombay Gazette for 31st January 1885 :— "It is not easy to speak of the Jews here in one breath, and pronounce upon their moral condition in a single sentence. Nowhere is it necessary to be more discriminating, if we would arrive at a true estimate. It is a lamentable fact that there is a certain portion of one of the smallest of the Jewish communities inseparably bound up with one of the worst classes of sins which defile our city of Bombay, forming herein, however, be it remembered, an exception to the bulk of the Jewish nation throughout the world at large. It is an equal fact, that the virtue of the female portion of the Bene-Israel community is one of a most exceptionally high standard, and this fact should not be disregarded when the other is mentioned. The Bene-Israel community possess their own peculiar faults of internal dissension, and of a growing tendency on the part of their rising generation to extravagance, squandering of property, and intemperance, yet this again co-existing with a laudable desire and strenuous effort on the part of the leaders of their community to rise out of the decay of centuries, and make their synagogue services reasonable, worthy and devout (according to their knowledge) and to educate their children."

The Bene-Israel women never mix socially in the company of men. At the time of marriage, circumcision, death and feasts, they do not associate with the male portion of the community. They always take their seats at some distance from the men. The Bene-Israel women, in the absence of their husbands, or of the elder of the house, do not allow strangers or even relatives of the male sex to visit them, nor do they ever sit chatting with them. In short, it is an understood precept with them not to associate with the male sex. If a stranger or even a relative calls at their house when their husbands are not at home, they tell him in plain words to come after their husbands return. They are not, however, Zanana or Purda-women, for they go and fetch things from the Bazar. whilst at the same time their whole deportment and demeanour is characterized by discretion and suitable feminine reserve. The proverb "modesty is an ornament to women" is fully applicable to

them. While very courteous in their manners, they realize that they are of high descent, and are so mindful, even to pride, of their pure blood, religion and caste, that they will never sit at the table with women kept as concubines, nor will they ever go to hear or see dancing girls; nor will they go to any theatre. Such being their modesty and hatred of wikedness, it would be fholly to imagine that the Bene-Israel are born of heathenish women.

We cannot help saying that among the Bene-Israel, the moral conduct of the females is of a higher standard than that of the males. The chastity of the women is far superior to that of the men. The men may sometimes deviate from the straight path, but it is practically safe to say that a female never does. Amongst the Bene-Israel, those men who keep heathen women are looked upon with ridicule as well as opprobrium, and are called "Butkia", which is a term of contempt for a person holding illicit connection with a heathenish woman.

Notwithstanding all this, the author of the Bombay Gazetteer ventured on page 507, part I Vol. XVIII to say that "the Bene-Israel like other immigrants almost certainly married with the women of the country"? Could the Gazetteer bring forward a single instance in which marriage has ever been known to take place with a heathenish woman? To write thus confidently on hearsay reports is indeed not worthy of a work published by Government. But why should we blame others for our own misfortunes? Who could have been betrayed into thus unintentionally stigmatizing us had we not a few among ourselves who through illicit connection with heathen women gave colour to the charge?

Another argument that Dr. Wilson, the Gazetteer and other writers have brought forward in support of their position as to the ancestors of Bene-Israel having come down from Yemen or Aden is the close resemblance between their feature and those of the Yemen or Aden Jews. We shall now examine their hypotheses, and shall observe at the beginning of our enquiry that one would not at all be justified in saying that because there is some analogy, however faint it may be, in the physiognomy of any two sects of the same people, they must necessarily once have been fellow-members of such and such a particular Israelite community. Being the descendants of the same progenitors, it is not at all surprising

that in any cases there should be some resemblance in their fautures. Nay, it is but quite natural to find some resemblance in common between the features of different sections of the same people distributed in different countries possessing the one quality in common that they have tropical climates, which must necessarily produce a similar effect on all that inhabit them. It is an acknowledged fact that there is some peculiarity in the lineaments of the Jew which enables foreigners to distinguish him from people of other denominations though he may be surrounded by unfavourable circumstances such as poverty and an unhealthy climate.

After the immigration of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel into India, they were, it is clear, in great straits in consequence of the wreck of the vessel in which they sailed. Poverty was therefore their lot and they had to labour day and night for their living. Their fair complexion of face and beauty of person must have been as a matter of course greatly affected by this, and perhaps may have been in some cases entirely lost. It is almost a truism to assert that, however fair and handsome a person may be, he loses his beauty if extreme poverty and consequent want of nourishment befall him. Accustomed as they were to live from their very infancy in a country lying in the temperate Zone prior to their immigration to India, the excessive heat of India must have greatly told upon their complexion and physique. As time rolled on, continuous residence in India tended to mar the former fairness of their faces and bodies which in time came to look sun-burnt like those of the Jews of Yemen or Aden. Persons with features similar to those of the Jews of Jerusalem, Hebron, Joppa and Safed may, however, still be seen amongst the Bene-Israel.

Man is after all largerly a creature of circumstances, and the people of any nation may be regarded as improving or deteriorating according to the circumstances by which they are surrounded. We therefore sometimes find a marked change in the bodily structure and features of a man in conformity with his condition in life. People stricken with poverty usually lose not only the fairness of their complexion but the beauty of the outlines of their form. A poor person on the other hand becomes quite an altered being, the moment he basks in the sunshine of prosperity.

It will thus be seen from the foregoing remarks that the Bene-Israel on arrival in India could hardly be expected to retain their delicacy of features and complexion in as much as they had to cope with a variety of adverse circumstances after they reached these shores.

According to medical science "the colour of the skin depends upon a substance interposed between the cutis and the cuticle and may be regarded as a peculiar secretion from the surface of the former. Heat and light seem to be necessary stimuli to the secretion of the black substance of the skin, which is increased like some other secretions on exposure to those agents and against the action of which, it appears to defend the skin". Hence it will happen that a people, however different, will, in time become like the natives among whom they settle, notwithstanding that they keep themselves entirely apart from them. (vide: "Researches into the Physical History of Mankind" by James Cowles Prichard M.D.).

We will quote another extract from Dr. Carpenter's work on Human Physiology*, in which he says that 'there is ample evidence that analogous changes may take place in the course of time which tend to produce a great variety of shades of colour, in the descendants of any one stock. Thus, in the great Indo-European family which may be unquestionably regarded as having had a common origin, we find tribes with fair complexion, yellow hair, and blue eyes, — others presenting the xanthous or olive hue, — and others decidedly black. A similar diversity may be seen among the American races, which are equally referable to one common stock; and it exists to nearly the same extent among the African nations, which appear to be similarly related to each other. It may be freely admitted that, among European Colonists settled in hot climates, such changes do not present themselves within a few generations; but in many well-known instances of earlier colonization, they are very clearly manifested. Thus the wide dispersion of the Jewish nation, and their remarkable isolation (maintained by their religious observances) from the people among whom they live, render them peculiarly appropriate subjects for such observations; and we accordingly find that the brunette com-

*) Eighth Edition published in 1876 page 1065.

plexion and dark hair, which are usually regarded as characteristic of that race, are frequently superseded, in the Jews of Northern Europe by red or brown hair and fair complexion; whilst the Jews who settled in India some centuries ago, have become as dark as the Hindus around them."

The truthfulness of the above statement may be seen in the bodily structure and appearance of the members of the family of the A s h t u m k a r Mheters who having lived for many generations in a remote village among the higher classes of natives, resemble very much the Konkanasth Brahmins both in fairness and in the grey colour of their eyes.

The Bene-Israel, unassisted as they are by any body, will work for their daily bread in any honest capacity as long as they are able to do so. Even unsupported Bene-Israel women will work from morning to evening for their livelihood so long as they have strength to do so. Grinding, pounding, cooking, carding of wool, cleaning, sewing etc. they will gladly do, but begging is considered to be the most humiliating and degraded of occupations among them.

When the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came to India, they had no manuscript copies of the Pentateuch. Such were very scarce in those days. At all events if they brought any, these must have been lost in the wreck they suffered. Such copies were in the case of Yemen or Aden Jews taken with them wherever they went; so that if there had been any intercourse between the Bene-Israel and the Arab Jews, or if the former had been an offshoot of the latter, they would in all probability have been in possession of such copies. The absence of the Sacred Scriptures no less than the known absence of all intercourse with the Bene-Israel on the part of the Arab-Jews prove the fact that the latter did not come from either Yemen or Aden nor from the Persian Gulf, as maintained by those who have written about them.

The Bene-Israel were also entirely ignorant of the existence of the Babylonian Talmud which was compiled by Rabbi Asche assisted by Rabbi Abina in the fifth century (504 A.D.). They were equally ignorant of the Jerusalem Talmud compiled by Rabbi Yohanan about 469 A.D. and also of the Targum Onkelos, compiled

about 100 A.D. The Yemen and Aden Jews, on the other hand, knew of the compilation of these works from the very date of their publication, and even knew the rules prescribed therein. Had the Bene-Israel been a race of emigrants from Arabia, they could not have entirely forgotten about the compilation of these master pieces of literary and religious toil, and would have tried to procure them, even though they had lost every thing they had brought with them to India. Moreover they would not have forgotten the rules for their daily diet such as the removal of tendons from meat, which as a matter of fact they came to know about only hundred years ago from the Cochin Jews with whom they came into contact.

Again, had the ancestors of the Bene-Israel come from Arabia Felix or Aden, their pronounciation of Hebrew words would not have exhibited such a marked difference as is daily to be heard. The letter G i m e l is pronounced by the Yemen or Aden Jews as J a m e l, and they pronounce H o l e m point as T z e r e, and the K a m e t z vowel is pronounced as K a m e t z H a t o o f. Hence they read in a manner peculiar to themselves. The pronounciation of these words by the Bene-Israel living in the Bombay Presidency is exactly like that of the Jews of Cochin and Jerusalem, of the Sepharadic community, with the exception, however, that the Bene-Israel cannot pronounce the guttural sounds correctly even now. This was the case with Galilean Jews before the Christian Era, a fact which has been noticed by Professor Graetz in his History of the Jews, who says, "The Galileans could not pronounce Hebrew with purity. They exchanged, and sometimes omitted the guttural sounds *)." Hence the Galilean Jews were as much noted for their incorrect pronounciation of gutteral sounds as the Ephraimites wer for the pronounciation of "Siboleth" instead of "Shiboleth".

The use of Arabic words by the Bene-Israel cannot be a proof of their Yemenite origin, since many of these words are to be found in Hebrew and a few have been borrowed from the Mohamedans. The Bene-Israel living in Maratha countries speak pure Marathi without any admixture of Arabic elements. We have some Arabic

*) History of the Jews by Graetz, Vol. II., chap. VI. p.149.

and Hebrew words even in English such as Korban, Cherubims, Hallalujah, but we are not justified in drawing the counclusion that there is an admixure of Hebrew and Arabic blood in Englishmen. The mixture of Arabic words in Marathi or Hindustani must have been formed when the Mahomedans became the rulers of India, for many of the Arabic words are found in almost all old documents. This may be corroborated by observing the fact that many English words have been adopted into the Marathi language since the establishment of the British rule in India.

Having tried to rebut the theory put forward by Dr. Wilson and by the Bombay Gazetteer that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came from Aden and Arabia Felix, or that they had any intercourse with the Arab-speaking Jews, we shall now examine the conclusions arrived at by the learned Doctor and by the Gazetteer as to the probable date of the arrival of the Bene-Israel into India.

Dr. Wilson observes that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came to India about 1200 years ago; while the Bombay Gazetteer states that they must have come sometimes during the sixth century; but the tradition current amongst the Bene-Israel is that their ancestors came to India about 1800 years ago, if not earlier than that date, and that there were only the natives of India except probably a few detached bodies of Greek and Parthian traders here and there on the coasts (vide Gazetteer Thana Vol. XIII Part II pp. 403-411). We know from the Indian History that the rise of Mahomedanism took place in 622 and Sinde was the first Indian province in which it was promulgated about 715. The Parsis came to India in 716, the Portuguese in 1498, the Dutch in 1594, the English in 1600, the Danes in 1616 and the French in 1668. Our readers may ask how it was that if the ancestors of the Bene-Israel came so early as that date, no notice was taken of them?*) The answer to this question is a simple one. They were very few in number and insignificant in position and remained in obscurity and seclusion for fear of being persecuted.

There are some others who assert without any evidence, and

*) Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. XI, p. 85, Kolaba and Janjira and Vol. XVIII, part I.

probably on the authority of Dr. Wilson, that the "ancestors of the Bene-Israel landed on the coast of India at the Nowgam port in the Konkan about 1200 years ago", when a wealthy Kutchi Mussalman of that place gave them shelter. But even a slight insight into the history of India and Mahomedanism will at once itself show how little the veracity of this statement can be maintained. It was not until the year 1422 A.D. that the inhabitants of Kutch and Kattiyawar, chiefly Lohana Hindus, were converted *) by the celebrated Arab saint Yusuff Uddin; and consequently how could it have been possible for a Kutchi Mohamedan to have lived at Nowagam about 1200 years ago, when according to the opinion of the learned Doctor the forefathers of the Bene-Israel immigrated into India? We do not think that any safe result can be arrived at from so haphazard a mode of reasoning.

The Jews of Cochin say that their ancestors came down to India about 379 A.D. The copper plates which they have in their possession bear the date 4139 as the date from the creation of the world. It is therefore evident that 1516 years have elapsed since they landed on the coast of Malabar. They knew of the Bene-Israel as having been resident here from very ancient times. If, then, they knew of the Bene-Israel from the very ancient times mentioned, and if 1516 years have elapsed since their own landing on the coast of India, how can the ancestors of the Bene-Israel be said to have come down to India about 1200 years ago only. Dr. Claudius Buchanan while engaged in the East in antiquarian researches relating to the descendants of the "Lost Ten Tribes" about 1817, arrived at the conclusion that the Israelites who live in Rajpuri and some oher provinces in India emigrated into that country before the commencement of the Christian Era. This statement also tends to show the date ascribed to the immigration of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel into India by Dr. Wilson and by the Bombay Gazetteer to be inaccurate. The Bene-Israel according to Dr. Buchanan kept themselves aloof from the Hindus, and though they were frequently harrassed by the Rajas of the Provinces, their race had not become totally extinct.

*) That is a question that has yet to be scientifically investigated (I. O.).

CHAPTER III.

Further religious revival among the Bene-Israel and the adoption of the name "Bene-Israel."

A very noticeable religious revival among the Bene-Israel commenced about 1796, when the first synagogue in Bombay was built. This period marked a new Era amongst the Bene-Israel, as it was no doubt the first occasion when they united in congregational worship ever since they left their mother-country. At or about this time the Jews from Cochin, Surat, Bagdad and other places began to pour into Bombay, giving the Bene-Israel opportunities of learning more and more about their religion. The fair, which till then had been held at Khandalla in Kolaba collectorate near Alibag was now held opposite the Bene-Israel Synagogue in Bombay annually on the Rosh-Hashana Leilanoth (i.e. the New year of the Trees) in honour of Elijah the Prophet. It was put a stop to,*) at the instance of one Judah Kindil who, it is said, was a Cochin Jew, and a Reader in the Bene-Israel Synagogue. He told the Bene-Israel that though Elijah the Prophet might have appeared to them as they believed, yet to celebrate the day in the manner in which they did, with such an exaggerated degree of festivities, was almost the same as worshipping him, an act which is opposed to the very spirit of their faith. Soon after the erection of the synagogue, some Jews, as for example Yacob Semah, Sillamon Yacob, Ezekiel Abdul Nubbee, Isaac Dawood and others came from Surat. They were the richest men of the time, and had come for purposes of trade but unhappily they took no steps to effect any improvements among the Bene-Israel.

*) That is greatly to be regretted! (I. O.).

But the year 1819 may still more be considered as opening a new epoch in the history of the Bene-Israel. At that time the Marathi translation of the Book of Genesis made by the American Missionaries, came into their hands. This gave them some idea of their own Scriptures, and greatly indebted them to the translators.

While the publication of the translation of the Old Testament Scriptures had practically only just commenced and was being carried on very slowly (for the translation of the Book of Exodus did not appear till 1833), a band of Cochin Jews arrived in Bombay in 1826, among whom the names of Michael and Abraham Sargon, David Baruch Rahabi, Hacham Samel and Judah David Ashkenazi may be prominently mentioned. These exerted themselves not only in edifying the minds of the Bene-Israel and of their children generally, but also particularly in turning the minds of those few of the Bene-Israel, who through heathen influence had gone astray from the path of the holy religion of their forefathers to a right direction, viz. to the study of their own religion, and to the contemplation on the Supreme Being. In this way, while David Baruch Rahabi and his successor Judah David Ashkenazi were engaged in effecting a religious revival at Revadanda, Hacham Samuel was doing the same at Alibag, and Michael and Abraham Sargon in Bombay. These Cochin Jews were teachers, preachers and expounders of the Law. During the working days of the week they taught the children, and in the meetings held on Sabbaths, they read and explained the Bible to the people, as was done by the sage Ezra during the time of the Second Temple. The labours of Michael and Abraham Sargon, Judah David Ashkenazi and Hacham Samuel extended over a number of years. Abraham Sargon worked for more than ten years, and Judah David Ashkenazi and Hacham Samuel for about ten years.

Michael Sargon was born at Cochin whither his ancestors had, it is believed, come from Stambul. Though he was a convert to Christianity, his affections towards his brethren in the flesh, and once in faith, were not diminished. He opened for them the gates of religious and secular knowledge, by starting schools for their children in Bombay, Revadanda, Alibag, Ashtumi and at Palli in the Pant Sachew territory. These schools continued from 1826 to 1832,

when they were closed for want of support, with the exception of the Bombay school, which was placed and remained under his personal superintendence until he retired from service in 1859. In addition to his supervision, he did his best to bring the Bene-Israel out of their state of darkness by explaining to them portions of the Hebrew Scriptures every Saturday, as long as he was in charge of the school. We regret to mention here that though he was sincerely working for the amelioration of the religious, moral and social condition of the Bene-Israel, his work was hindered on two occasions by the leaders of the very people for whose welfare he was working : once by the leaders of the old party in 1838 when the congregation was split into two fractions, and again in 1842 by the leaders of the new party. But with great patience he surmounted these difficulties. In fact, his enthusiasm for the self-imposed task of reclaiming the Bene-Israel from the mental darkness, in which they had sunk, was so intense, his sympathy for the Bene-Israel so warm, his attachment to them so exceedingly devoted and sincere, his wish to ameliorate their condition so firm and earnest, that during the tenure of thirty or more years of service, he seldom failed to attend any of the Sabbath meetings which were held from 11 to 3 on that day, in order to explain to the Bene-Israel their Scriptures, which last were not completely translated till 1855. He only spoke on Christianity when he was forced to do so. Sargon died on the 15th June 1870 at Surat, at the age of 80.

In about 1833, when the Marathi Translation of the Book of Exodus was published by the American Missionaries, another band of Cochin Jews, consisting of Shellomo Salem Shurrabi, Hyam Joseph Helega, Mayer and Sillamon Kindil, Obadia Zackai, followed by Baruch David Ashkenazi, David Judah Ashkenazi, Ephraim Jacob Cohen, Joseph David Ashkenazi, Elijah and Joseph Halegoa, Abraham Judah Gemal and others arrived in Bombay one after the other. In 1832 or thereabout, David Sassoon and others had arrived from Baghdad for trade. The labours of some of the above named Cochin Jews are worthy of being mentioned. Shellomo Salem Shurrabi published in 1840 the Selihoth (or form of prayer for forgiveness). Hyam Joseph Halegoa translated,

with the assistance of a Bene-Israel named Hyam Essaji Garsulkar, the Hebrew Passover service, called teh Haggada, into Marathi for the use of the Bene-Israel, and published it in 1845. Obadia Zackai published in 1846 a Hebrew Shiroth or Song-book. David Judah Ashkenazi published in 1845 a translation into Marathi of a Hebrew Almanac containing the rules for fixing the days of observance for a period of 500 years. But the services rendered by Hacham Shellomo were of yet greater value and threfore we give a short sketch of his life.

Hacham Shellomo Salem Shurrabi was a man of tall stature and of a commanding bearing. He was intelligent, active and amiable. His appearance inspired reverence in and out of the community, and most persons saluted him as the High Priest of the Bene-Israel. He served as a Hazan or a Reader in the then newly-formed synagogue of the Bene-Israel for the trifling sum of Ruppees 100 per annum. Although he was twice assaulted by the leaders of the old synagogue with the object of inducing him to foresake his support of the new one, yet being a man of resolute mind, he was not prevailed upon to do so. Like the old masters of the Talmud, he obtained his livelihood by handicraft. He worked as a book-binder; and while engaged in his avocation, he was at all times ready to explain any scriptural difficulty that might happen to be brought to him by any Bene-Israel. He was a Reader, Preacher, Expounder of the Law, Mohel and Schochet. Being a Mohel (circumciser) and Shohet (slaughterer) he could hardly get any time on ordinary days to teach in the morning; but on the Sabbath, after morning prayers were over, he held meetings from 11a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m. in school rooms or in the synagogue. The Bene-Israel gathered in large numbers and listened to him with great attention. While coming from Cochin, a town on the Malabar coast, to Bombay with his maternal grand-father, Meyir Sadi, he was ship-wrecked. After a long struggle for about two days before he could reach land, he was almost as by miracle thrown on the shores of Novagam, the spot where the first settlers of the Bene-Israel had found refuge many centuries before. His maternal grand-father was drowned, and his body was found in the Bombay harbour. One Jacob Aaron Sanker, a Bene-Israel of Alibag, while returning home along the

shore, found Shellomo lying there in a helpless state. Touched with pity at the wretched condition of the man, he took him to Ramnath, a place a mile distant from Alibag, and there gradually restored to health the future spiritual guide of the Bene-Israel.

Shellomo knew Hindustani and Marathi, in which languages he explained the principles of the Jewish faith. The establishment of the new synagogue in Bombay, as well as of the synagogues at Alibag, Revadanda and Panwell is due to the exertions of Shellomo. He was a sweet singer in Israel, and was to be seen at the houses of both the rich and poor on ceremonial occasions. He was very zealous and earnest in teaching the Bene-Israel the true spirit of Judaism. His mode of reciting prayers was so persuasive, and his delivery of sermons so impressive that men from all sides flocked to hear him, and "fools who came to scoff remained to pray". He served the Community for about 18 years, and died on the 17th April 1856.

Since then religious progress amongst the Bene-Israel has been comparatively at a stand-still.

After the death of Shellomo Salem Shurrabi, the Bene-Israel themselves made some attempts in the direction of religious progress. We must not forget the services rendered by the late Shalom Samuel Kehimkar in this respect. Rather let us pay a just tribute to the memory of a man, who, like his father the late Samuel Jacob Kehimkar, not only taught the Bene-Israel children for a period of about 35 years, but also taught their parents to appreciate the beautiful prayers which they too often repeated without understanding them. In 1859 he translated with our assistance the Daily Hebrew Prayers into Marathi, and we now hear many people recite them every morning and evening before and after their daily work. The prayers for the Sabbath and for the Rosh Hodesh, or New Moon, were also translated by him; but it is to be regretted that they were not published. Shalom Samuel Kehimkar died on the 14th June 1893 at the age of 76.

Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar also rendered great service to the community. He translated the Propitiatory Prayers, published the same in 1859, the New Year's Service in 1862, the Atonement Service, Part I in 1867, and Part II in 1868 (which latter was published at the expense of Mr. Abraham Suc-

coba Penkar), and the Prayers for the 5 fast-days in 1890. Besides this, Joseph published in 1879 and 1880 a book on "The True Aspect of Judaism," and "A Chronological outline of Ancient Jewish History" and also a book of Hebrew Abreviations in 1890. The following works of the same author deserve to be mentioned : The Jewish marriage ceremony, 1866; The Ethics of the Fathers, 1870; Scripture Proof of Jewish Doctrine, 1876; Hebrew Primer, 1881.

The late Elijah Shalom Walwatkar rendered no less service to the Bene-Israel community in translating and publishing in 1878 under the title "Naftule Elohim" the sermons delivered by Dr. Hermann Adler at the Bayswater Synagogue in London, refuting the principal charges brought against the Israelites in the Watchman's Voice, and other tracts (published by the Bombay Tract Society) for not acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah etc. He also assisted in the publication of the Selihoth, or Propitiatory Prayers; and of a book of Ritual, treating of the Jewish rites and ceremonies, in Hebrew.

We should be lacking in justice if we were to omit to mention here the name of Ezekiel Benjamin Penkar who did no inconsiderable service to the community. He established an Anglo-Jewish and Vernacular Press in 1884 at his own expense, and while the press was in existence, he published the following books of Jewish interest, on his own account :—

Tefilath Hachodesh, The Daily, Sabbath and Rosh-Hodesh (or New Moon) Prayers, translated by Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, in two volumes, in Hebrew and Marathi in 1890.

Agada Shel Pessah, The Hagada or Passover Service in Hebrew and Marathi, translated by the late Mr. Elijah Shalom Walwatkar.

"The Talmud" by Polano, translated by Mr. Nene.

"The Jewish Preacher", "A statute unto Israel", "Stories from the Talmud", "Curiosities of Judaism".

"More Light" by Rabbi L. Weiss, in a Marathi translation, was published by Aaron Jacob Divekar.

No other attempts beyond those just mentioned seem to have been made by synagogue authorities for edifying the minds of the Bene-Israel or for bringing the community into public notice outside of its own circle. When the Bene-Israel increased in number

and progressed a little in education, the want began to be felt of a printing press, which should serve the community in a variety of ways. This want was supplied by the late Reuben Abraham Korlekar, who took it upon himself to establish a press. Commencing from the 8th of September 1877, he began to publish a fortnightly paper of super royal octavo size called Or Emeth, "The Satya Prakash" or the Light of Truth. Although this gentleman was a person of small means, yet his enterprize was, it is impossible to deny, an admirable one. He placed the management of the paper in the hands of a committee, who appointed a young man from among the Bene-Israel as editor. The paper contained articles both on religious and secular subjects of a simple character, suited alike to the limited ability of its editor and to the minds of its Bene-Israel readers. But no subjects connected with politics were discussed in the paper, as the Bene-Israel, it was felt, were not as yet in a position to handle such problems. The paper fared well at first, although it suffered from the disadvantage that while it was naturally but little subscribed to by people of other denominations, it was at the same time but meagrely supported by the people for whom it was written, they having as yet but partially developed a taste for such reading. Later on, when the editor commenced writing articles which were unpalatable to his co-religionists in Bombay, Poona, Tenna and Revadanda, the people of these places with-held their support from the paper. This state of affairs was reported in its issue of the 9th of November 1883. The proprietor in consequence changed the editorship of the paper from the 31st of January 1881. But a paper in which the Bene-Israel had once ceased to take interest, proved afterwards to be unable to recover, and could not again succeed in winning the sympathy and support of the people. The paper continued till the 27th of June 1884 when the proprietor stopped it owing to his illness which ultimately ended in his death. He seems to have been much disheartened at a defeat which he sustained in a law case brought upon him on account of an alleged libelous article which he had written.

When the above paper had just commenced its work, another forthnightly paper of super royal octavo-size called the "Israel Ashram" or "The Shelter of Israel" was started on

the 30th of September 1877. It is said that the paper was edited by the late David Hyam Divekar. After the issue of about twelve numbers, the paper came to a sudden and untimely end.

A third fortnightly paper called "Israel" next raised its voice, commencing from 1st of April 1881. It was edited gratuitously by the late Samuel Hyam Kehimkar. The paper advocated the cause of religious re-form and educational progress among the Bene-Israel. Besides this, its editor had rendered into Marathi with our assistance Essays, translated from "Moral Biblical Gleanings and Practical Teachings" of the late I. L. Mocatta. One of these, namely, the Essay on Parental duty, he published in book form. Moreover he wrote several articles against the discord which then prevailed (and still prevails) among the Bene-Israel, and which has had the effect of much weakening the Bene-Israel community in its power of organization. This view of the editor of "Israel" has later been corroborated by the Rev. Dr. Mackichan, who, at the thirty ninth annual meeting of the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society held on the 29th of August 1893, addressed his audience thus :— "Unfortunately small as their (Bene-Israel) community is it is much divided. They have too many synagogues, and their power to do good to their own people or to others, is thereby greatly weakened". Samuel conducted the paper till his death which took place on the 11th of June 1884. We only quote what the editor of the Anglo-Vernacular Christian paper called "Dnyanodaya" or the "Rise of Knowledge" said about Samuel when announcing his demise in the issue of 3rd of July 1884. He said that "Mr. Samuel was well educated and had good knowledge both of English and Marathi" and that "the 'Israel' paper was edited by him zealously and with ability." The paper continued to be published until the 16th of Febrpary 1885, when its issue had to be stopped, as the support which it had been used to receive from the Israelite School of the Anglo-Jewish Association for advocating the cause of the Association and of its school was discontinued. The "Israel" was, during the first year, published on supper royal quarto size and then on royal folio size. Samuel was an undergraduate of the University of Bombay, and had published a Catechism of the Hebrew faith. His death was premature taking place at the age of 27 years.

It is indeed a difficult task to edit a paper for the Bene-Israel, who, being divided into several fractions, are always at feud with one another. The social, political and religious rights of the Bene-Israel will become recognized and the impediments in the way of such condition be removed only when the several factions will drown their private animosity towards one another, and work with one common mind for the same end.

In most of these directions did the paper "Israel" work but never did it tolerate religious fanaticism or superstition.

Shortly after the "Israel" had commenced its work, another forthnightly rival paper of super royal octavo size called "Ner Israel" or the "Lamp of Israel" was started, probably under the editorship of the person who at first edited the "Satya Prakash". The "Ner Israel" continued from the 5th of October 1881 to the 13th of November 1885, when it expired for want of support which was withheld by its subscribers as the paper manifested party feeling and became obnoxious to many of its readers. This may be seen from a complaint which appeared in the columns of the second issue of that very paper of the 10 of October 1884. It had been recently revived commencing its re-appearance from the 6th of January 1893 under the same name, but it ceased to exist at the end of February 1897.

Another monthly paper of super royal octavo size called "Bene-Israelite" has been set on foot. It started on the 25th of Kislev 5654 or the 3rd of December 1893.

Notwithstanding the attempts made by the Bene-Israel themselves in the direction of religious progress, it is worth while to mention here that so long as the able Cochin expounders of the Jewish faith exerted the diligence they did in impressing the principles of Judaism upon their Bene-Israel disciples, none of the latter went astray, in spite of Missionary influence which was then so busily at work; but as soon as the efforts of these Jewish preachers ceased in consequence of their deaths, and their places were not filled, it has happened that some of the Bene-Israel forsook the faith of their forefarthers.

This state of affairs having been represented to the great and

philanthropic body of the Anglo-Jewish Association of London, that Association was kind enough to open schools in Bombay, commencing their enterprise from the 1st of April 1881, for the religious and secular education of the Bene-Israel children. We will deal with these schools at some length in the chapter on the "Education of the Bene-Israel Childern".

The expression "Bene-Israel" i.e. the "Children of Israel" is commonly to be met with in the Old Testament, especially in the Pentateuch. After the death of king Solomon, the nation was divided into two kingdoms, the one of Israel and the other of Judah. The former comprised ten tribes and the latter two, Judah and Benjamin, who occupied the southern portion of Palestine. When Jerusalem was besieged and taken by the King Nebuchadnezzar, a large number of the tribe of Judah were led away captives to Babylon. Gradually these exiles took up the position rather of colonists than of captives. Lands were allotted to them and they grew to own and to love the soil they cultivated. But their Prophets kept alive in them the sense that though Babylonians instead of Palestinians, they belonged to the tribe of Judah. Hence the name Judæan or Jew came into use, which has now been applied to the remnants of the "Scattered race" all over the world.

It will thus be seen that the term "Jew" is of a later origin than that of "Israel". The former is derived from Judah and can be claimed by those who can prove their lineage from that tribe; while the latter was applied to the ten tribes which were carried away into captivity when Palestine was invaded by Shalmaneser, about one hundred and thirty years before the fall of Jerusalem, and were transplanted into other regions. The Israelites of the Bombay Presidency being unable to show their lineage from the tribe of Judah, owing to their historical accounts having been lost at the time when they were ship-wrecked off the coast of India, have consequently adopted for themselves the name "Bene-Israel".

The Israelites of the Bombay Presidency are led to believe from traditional accounts and from corroborating facts that the name "Bene-Israel" was adopted by their ancestors during the time when the Mohamedan power prevailed in India, and Islam was propagated by the sword. The hatred which the Mohamedans bear towards the

name Yehudi (Jew) as may be seen from the Koran, is in itself a ground for believing that our ancestors, through fear of being compelled to renounce their religion, or of losing their lives and property, thought it expedient to adopt the name less hated by the followers of Mahomed, viz "Bene-Israel" (children of Israel) which served both objects : the retention of their ancient name and faith, and the preservation of their lives and property. One fact may here be prominently brought forward in corroboration of the above statement.

During the reign of Tippoo Sultan and the prosperity of the East India Company, that is, during the Second Mysore War (1780—84) several Bene-Israel, who had enlisted in the service of the Honourable Company, were taken captives by Tippoo's army, and would have been put to the sword had they declared themselves "Yahudim". They were released in consequence of Tippoo's mother having begged of her son to spare the lives of the "Bene-Israel" so much talked of in the Koran, and whom she had never had the opportunity of seeing in India. In course of time their descendants made it a point to deny that they were "Yehudim" or Jews and felt insulted if any one called them by that name, for a reproacheful rejoinder, such as the word K u f r e e (heretic) was sure to follow the use of that word.

The total number of the Bene-Israel as shown by the Census Returns of 1891 is 13,547.

They are distributed in the following places :

Bombay City (5,021); District of Ahmedabad : Daskroi (194); Dhandhuka and Prantej (13); Kapadvanj (9); Broach district (23); Surat (36); Thana district : Salsette (362), Dahanu, Shahapur, Kalyan, Bhiwndi (24); Kolaba district : Alibag (790), Mangao (85), Roha (413), Pen (416), Nagothna Petha (76), Panwell (521), Urun Petha (2), Karjat (17), Khalapur Petha (57); Kanara district (12); Khandesh district : Jalgaon (23), Bhusawal (62), Dhulia, Nawapur Petha, Chalisgaon (14); Nasik district : Nasik 10), Igatpura (98); Ahmednagar district : Nagar (32), Akola (7); Poona (930); Sholapur (20); Sattara (82); Dharwar (27); Karachi (47); Hydarabad Sind (32); Shikarpura (27); Upper Sind, Jacobabad (4). The total in British Territory is 12,465.

The population in Feudatory States is as follows :

Kutch (47); Palanpur (34); Mahi Kanta (6); Kattiawar (105); Rewa Kanta (6); Surat Agency (6); Janjira (599); Bhor (271); Sattara Agency (4); Southern Maratha Janghirs (6). The grand total amounts to 13,547.

It includes both the Jews and the Bene-Israel. But the Jews cannot be more than a thousand in Bombay, and about two thousand and four hundred at Aden. Thus, excluding the Jews, the Bene-Israel in the whole of the Bombay Presidency, including Aden, are 10,147. Although this number of Bene-Israel in comparison with that of other communities in India is very small, still they are scattered thorughout the entire length and breadth of the Bombay Presidency. Besides these, there are three families of Bene-Israel in Calcutta, four in Mysore, one in Madras, more than a dozen in Burmah, three in Secunderabad, one or two in Jhansi. The major portion of the community is, however, to be found in Bombay, where they probably have settled since 1750. A few families have gone to Aden at the call of professional duties either civil or military. Five or six families went some years ago to Challisgam in the Khandiesh Collectorate, where Government favoured them with land free of assessment for a certain period of years, but most of them returned home. Some Bene-Israel by name Samson Bundu Awaskar, Shalom Samuel Thulkar and Shalom Wakrulkar with his son and wife went to the Island and Mauritius about 50 years ago in the employ of Sugar planters but they have not been heard of since then. Some Bene-Israel had at one time gone to Ceylon, Zanzibar, Egypt and even to Cyprus, but almost all of them seem to have returned to Bombay except a few about whom little has since been heard. Two of the Bene-Isral named Aaron Yetto Churrikar and Isaac Samuel Kassookar have gone to Zomba with Major C. A. Edwards on behalf of British Central African Administration on or about the 27th of March 1895 at the call of professional duties on an agreement of three years. A Bene-Israel by name Eliezer Daniel Koletkar, a draftsman in the office of the Quarter Master General of the Bombay Army, once made the ascent of the Hymalia Mountains with Adolph, Herman and Robert Schlagintweit

for the Magnetic Survey of India from 1854-56, and after having crossed the Milum Pass, he returned.

Before we finish this part of our narrative we must mention here a note-worthy fact in the annals of the Bene-Israel. From the time of their arrival in India no Bene-Israelite had ventured to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, their desolate and forsaken motherland, until the 1st of February 1880, when Isaac Solomon Ghosalkar and Joel Samuel Shirkolkar formed the first Bene-Israel pilgrims thither. In Port Said they were the guests of a Jew of that place, by name Isaac Giyat, who had been a fellow passenger with them from Aden. They arrived at Jerusalem on the 28th of February 1880. They visited many of the important places of historic interest, which the Hebrew Scriptures have made famous; and found themselves strengthened in the conviction of the truthfulness of the Bible. They returned after a sojourn of 21 days in Jerusalem, on the 14th of April 1880. Isaac Solomon Ghosalkar, after his return, gave an account of his journey to his brethren, the Bene-Israel, in a public meeting, and published the same in book form in 1887. Some years after the return of the above mentioned gentlemen, another Bene-Israel named Hyam Ezekiel Pingley also left Bombay with his wife for Jerusalem, on the 1st of April 1894 and returned on the 19th of May 1894. He has also published an account of his journey in book form with photos of many of the important places.

As long as the Island of Bombay was in the possession of the Portuguese, the Bene-Israel did not venture to come to Bombay for they were afraid of being compelled to embrace Christianity in the same way as so many of the other natives of India had been coerced; and for this very reason, no Bene-Israel has yet ventured to go to the Portuguese settlement at Goa. Apart from more important deterring reasons people as a rule prefer living in or near a fort, because there is less chance of tumult or riots occurring in such places; and yet the Bene-Israel had not gone to live in the Revadanda Fort, which was built by the Portuguese in 1521-24. Similarly, although the Bene-Israel were living in the midst of Moguls on the one side and of the Portuguese on the other, they still contrived by prudent action to avoid being molested by either

of them. On the 23rd of September 1668, when the king of Portugal gave the Island of Bombay as a dowry to his daughter Catherine of Braganza who had married Charles II., that Island came into the possession of the late Honourable East India Company together with the troops transferred from the King's to the Company's service, along with the arms, ordnance and stores. The chief Government of the Company in India was not, however, removed from Surat to Bombay till 1686, as owing to its bad condition it was then anything but an attractive spot.

Although the Island of Bombay came into the hands of the British, the Bene-Israel for long did not dare to come to Bombay for three reasons, one of which was that the Island of Bombay was open to the attacks of the Marathas, the Sidis, the Dutch, the French and others from all sides and it was considered an unsafe country for habitation, having only a few topasses (cannon) to protect it from foreign and local attacks. Another reason was that the Island of Bombay was an exceedingly unhealthy place, and was always pervaded by an offensive smell. In fact it was a place infested with pestilence and many fell victims to Cholera, fever and other epidemics. Thirdly the Bene-Israel hesitated to move thither until they should learn something of the policy of the English, their mode of governing, their religious toleration etc. But as soon as their apprehensions on these points were removed, the Bene-Israetl gradually commenced their influx into Bombay, their first arrivals dating from the middle of the eighteenth century. This is ascertained by the fact that the Bene-Israel who came first to Bombay had their sons enlisted in the British army as early as in 1760. Among those who came first to Bombay was a member of the Awaskar family who was therefore called Mombaikar,*) i.e. "Resident of Bombay". The second Ben-Israel that came to Bombay was, it is said, one by name Hassaji Divakar, from the Janjira state, whose sons, having been enlisted in 1760 in the British Army, were promoted to the rank of Native Commandant in 1775. These people, it is said, first lived somewhere near the Bazar Gate, where they had their oil-mills in their thatched houses, but when they were ordered to tile them,

*) Mombay is the Marathi word for Bombay (I. O.).

they removed to somewhere near the present Native Infantry lines. As, however, the place was required for building houses for Native Troops, they removed to Koliwada, a spot almost entirely inhabited by fishermen. Gradually they removed to the locality where the first synagogue now stands and is called "Samaji Hassaji Street" or more briefly "Samuel Street". This street or rather road, was named after the Bene-Israel above-mentioned who was a native Commandant in the 6th Battalion, and who built the first synagogue in Bombay. Here the Bene-Israel lived in a group, their houses extending from one end of the road to the other, i.e. from North to South. The houses of the Bene-Israel were located in a double row from the Old synagogue as far as to the present Khoja Jamat Khana and were from two or three hundred in number.

The Bene-Israel are now scattered all over the town and Island of Bombay. For want of houses of their own, some have removed to Narelwadi, Chinchpoki, Mahaluzumi, Parel, Dadur, Mahim, Bandora, Sion and Coorla, in which localities they generally live as tenants. A few of the Bene-Israel, however, have houses of their own, on Khuduck, Umerkhadi, Princes Dock, and in the Israel Mohla, which last is situated on the West side of the Samuel Street. But these do not number more than 35. This shows that the Bene-Israel are now far from being prosperous, and are gradually tending towards poverty.

We will now give a short account of some of the oldest Bene-Israel families that flourished in times gone by and the descendants of which are still living, though, with the exception of one or two, no longer in affluent circumstances.

The C h u r r i k a r s take up the first place in point of chronological order. We have no authentic information as to the founder of this family, except that one Aaron belonging to it and supposed to be its founder, was appointed Nayek or Commander of a fleet by Khanoji Angria about the beginning of the seventeenth century. He performed his duties so satisfactorily that he received some land in I n a m from that chieftain. It is still in possession of his descendants, and is enjoyed in perpetuity, though they have, it is said, to pay some land tax to the present government. The Churrikars held the most important and responsible post of Naik or

Commanders of Angria's fleet until it was burnt by the Peshwa in about 1793. Besides the land granted to them in Inam they also received a Sanad entitling them to receive special honour and precedence from the local members of the Bene-Israel community, which we give below.

This Royal edict was issued consequent on a petition presented at the Fort of Kolaba in the year 1162 corresponding to 1761 of the Christian Era, by Tanaji bin Succoji Naik, an Israelite inhabitant residing in the province of Cheul, to His Royal Highness Raghoji Angria of Kolaba, perfect and proficient in all the affairs of state, the fountain of confidence and the defender of faith, and of His Ministers etc. It is to the effect that he, the petitioner by descent through a line of ancestors served His Royal Highness from generation to generation with great devotion and loyalty, and trusts to do the same in future; that whereas the office of Naik which the predecessors of His Highness were graciously pleased to confer on his ancestors has also been held by the successive members of his family, and that on the occasion of weddings or festivities in the community certain honours and presents were accustomed to be rendered first to the Kaji, then to the members of his family and lastly to the people of the community, and that such was the practice in force hitherto — is still evidenced by vestiges of it still remaining, such as the presents of betelnut and leaves which are still in vogue; and that he prays that His Highness might be pleased to allow the members of his family to enjoy these honours and privileges in full as in times heretofore. We therefore issue a Royal edict that after the Kaji has been served with honours and presents, the same shall be given to the Naik, and then be distributed among the people of the community; that when there is no person of the Naik's family present, then they shall be given to the Kaji, and afterwards to the community; and that no one shall object to this right being enjoyed by the said Naik's family. After the Kaji has received the honours and presents, they are to be given to the Naik, who shall from generation to generation enjoy the same, from father to son. After taking a copy of this edict, the original is to be returned. The Naik shall also be entitled to receive wedding presents. This

edict issued on the 12th day of the month of Zilkad. The Naik shall also receive the Veeda and other honours in the capacity of Mheters or chief village officers of the said Island of Janjira. — Dated the aforesaid etc.

Another sanad to the above effect was issued by His Royal Highness Baburao Angria in favour of Aaron Naik bin Tanaji Naik and Bhowji Naik bin Succoji Naik, the descendants of Tanaji bin Succoji Naik mentioned in the above Sanad. The date of this Sanad is the 5th moon of the month of Shaban in the Sur year 1203, corresponding to 1802 of the Christian Era. But it is to be observed that although the office of Naik was abolished from the time that Angria's fleet was burnt by the Peshwa, yet the descendants of Naik look back to it with pride and are offended if they are not designated as such.

Like the Churrikars, it is said that another Bene-Israel family, the Kurrulkars, were commanders of the Janjira fleet; but unfortunately we are not able to get any reliable information about this family.

Next in point of importance to the Kurrulkars there were the Ashtamkars, who flourished during the Ahmednuggar Kingdom, the supermacy of the Angria and the rule of the Peshwas. They were appointed Mheters or village officers and we learn from the Sanad in possession of the descendants of this family what those rights and privileges were which they enjoyed. Allusion is made in this Sanad to Mullik Amber the famous Abyssinian Minister of the Nizamshaee dynasty, who kept up the sinking fortunes of that kingdom for a long time, and whose life is so familiarly known to all students of history as to need no repetition here. The Sanad spoken of above runs as follows :—

"Be it known to the Dessais, Deshpandeys, Kulkarnies and all the other officers of Taluka Ashtami by this title-deed that Dadawra, son of Nagawra, oilmen, and Mheter (village officer) of the district aforesaid, having had a dispute with Eswara, oilmen of the Kasba aforesaid, in reference to the rights and privileges of receiving special honour and precedence, lodged a complaint with Ramchandra Krishna Godbole, the Subedar (chief

Judicial officer) of the district of Birwadi; the said officer thereupon called the landlords residing in the said district and asked them to give in writing their oppinion as to which of the parties concerned had enjoyed from time immemorial and from generation to generation the rights and privileges of the village officership, and all the honours due to their title. A statement was therefore forwarded by the landlords to the chief officer of the district as follows:— "Looking into the records of Mullik Amber we do not find there a title-deed of the privileges herein-before-mentioned granted to oilman Eswara." He therefore had to pay Ruppees 60 by way of penalty and your rights as Mheters (or village officers) have been confirmed; and title deeds, issued by the chief officer of the district, were granted to you on payment of Ruppees 20 in Nazarana. You then requested the landlords to grant you a title-deed of hereditary rights and privileges conferred upon you. It being therefore seen by a reference to the records of Mullik Amber, that the enjoyment of the said rights and privileges of having special honour and precedence has been in the possession of your ancestors for five or seven generations, your rights as Mheter or village officer have been ratified and granted to you to be enjoyed uninterruptedly from father to son and from generation to generation. Special honours should first be given to the aforesaid Mheters (by all the members of the oil-pressing community). Besides these, you are entitled to be exempted from house tax and cattle tolls, and are authorised to exercise the rights of Mheter or village officer as before, and in perpetuity. Written by the Kulkarni of the district herein before named signed and sealed."

Elloji Mheter, a man of brilliant talents, was one of the most distinguished members of this family. It is said that he farmed for about 18 years the custom and fare duties on payment of Rs. 9,000 annually to the Government of the Peshwa and the Angria. He had also entered into Abkari contracts; but when the Ashtumi district came into the possession of the English government, he farmed the custom and fare duties for about 18 years on payment of Rupees 40 000 annually. The descedants of the Ashtamkar Mheters are still living in a village called Ashtumi in the Kolaba Collectorate ,and are still called the Mheters of the village. Aaron, alias

Dada Samuel, Mheter is also a Khot*) of a large area of land which annually yields to him a considerable income derived from the pro duce of rice.

There lived at Kehim in times of remote antiquity a man by name Aaron, a Bene-Israel gentlemen who had four sons by name Elloji, Abaji, Bhowji and Essaji. After the death of their father they went to Nadgam, a village in the Hubshi territory, being frequently molested by the Pindaries. Of these four brothers Elloji had a son by name Joseph who came to reside at Ramraj a village in the Angria's territory after the death of his father. He had a son named Jacob who was well-to-do in life and possessed a large herd of cattle which were let out to graze in the forest of Mahan where he had enclosed a large space for housing the cattle by night. He had also a great many rice fields and a park attached at Ramraj. He was besides a money lender, but his house being several times plundered and burnt to ashes by gangs of freebooters such as the Pindaries, Dacoits etc., he was reduced to poverty. His grandson Shalom Samuel Kehimkar is still in possession of some of his lands which annually yield to him some income derived from the produce of rice.

After the Kehimkars came the Doodkars. The most important members of this family were Bapuji and Moses Doodkar who lived in Revadanda. Bapuji Doodkar belonged to the family of Kamarlekars, but his family received the name of Doodkar from the fact that his ancestors supplied the Government of Angria with Dood or milk. Bapuji lived in the time of the Angrias, and was a wholesale merchant. He traded in oil from Jafrabad, in tobacco from the Ghauts and Surat, in betelnut from the Konkan, sandal from Malabar, cotton from Coomta as well as spices and many other commodities. It is said that he had his own ships wherewith he traded with other ports. He did much business and held a considerable fortune for some time but he failed in consequence of almost all his warehouses being burnt in a great conflagration.

The Divekars came next in point of time. One by name Bowaji who lived at Diva in the Hubshi territory is said to have been the founder of this family. He had a son Hassaji who in

*) Vide Bombay Gazetteer Vol. XI p. 165.

turn had seven sons, but we know the names of five sons only, viz Essaji, Silamon, Samaji, Elloji and David. Of these five sons three are well-known as Native Commandants of some of the Regiments of the Native Infantry of the British Government, while the other two were Subedars in the Bombay Army. Samaji whom we have already mentioned above was by far the most important personage of this family. He was a Native Commandant of the 6th Battalion. He was a pious man and built a synagogue for the Bene-Israel community in Bombay. In 1797 he died childless at Cochin, where he had gone to fetch Scrolls of the Law after having built the synagogue in 1796. David, the son of his brother Essaji, was adopted by his widow. David lived on the income of his ancestral estate, situated in the Mandvi Ward of Bombay, in Parel and Girgaum, which he improved much during his life time. He conducted the duties of the headmanship of the Bene-Israel community for over 40 years, and at first to his credit. Latterly some of his associates in the community were dissatisfied with him. Hence there arose a schism amongst the members of his congregation in 1823 and in 1838. David had five sons, Samuel or Babaji, Hyam, Jacob, Isaac and Daniel. With the exception of Hyam, they were spendthrifts and wasted everything they had. Though Hyam left much wealth for his son David, it was squandered away by the son after his father's death. His mother, however, built at her own expense a synagogue in Penn. The expenses incurred on this account amounted to about Ruppees 2,000.

Samaji had a brother Essaji who was also a Native Commandant in the Bombay Army. His son Abraham lived very frugally and bequeathed to his own sons Ezekiel, Daniel, Solomon and Aaron all the property he had inherited from his father. Of his four sons the eldest, Ezekiel, was a large contractor and it is said that it was under his contract that there were built some of the old public buildings such as the District Benevolent alms house of Sir Jamsetji Jeejibhoy, the General Assembly's Institution now occupied by the Gokuldas Tezpal School and the Trinity Chapel and Indo-British Institution in Sonapur, now converted into a public market by Adamji Peerbhoy. He was a man of money, but lost all his money in his declining years.

Bapuji Gudkar and his brother Bundu Gudkar are also said to have been large contractors. It is said that the water pipes from the Esplanade to the Musjid-Bunder were laid under their contract. Many public and private buildings were also built by them. We find their names engraved on a slab in the wall of the compound built at their own expense and attached to the old burying ground at the back of the Sassoon Synagogue at Byculla.

Tanaji Bapuji Dhokerkar who lived in Aglayachi Wadi in Revadanda reared the fabric of his fortune after the wreck of that of Bapuji Doodkar. At first he was in the employ of a Brahmin named Tatia Dhabbu; but he gave up that employment and commenced business in Bhods (Fish-bladders). He is said to have received great assitance from his former master in his business. He traded also in oil, sandal, cotton, coconut kernel and spices, and did business also as a money lender. He was successful in his transactions and enterprizes and acquired at first considerable fortune. He was an owner of plantations of coconut and other trees and of farms of rice fields which produced large quantities of that grain annually.

Sirdar Bahadur Musaji Balaji Oomerdekar, Native Commandant of the Ghaut Police corps at Tanna, also possessed wealth.

Shalom Essaji Sogawkar who came from Borlai, a village in the Hubshi territory worked as a mason at first in Bombay. After a short time, he became contractor, made a considerable fortune and at his own expense and at a cost of Rupees 1400 he built a synagogue in Borlai and also granted land worth about Rs. 2,000 for its endowment.

From the above it will be seen that the Bene-Israel did not as a community attain any permanent position of influence in the Konkan, either in the state service or in merchantile pursuits, for although they were robust in health, they were not strong enough to appropriate any provinces of the Konkan by force of arms on account of their small numbers, and on account of the insufficiency of means at their disposal. They were not backed by any Prince as was the case with the Sidis and Angrias, the former of whom were assisted by the Mahomedans and the latter by the Marathas.

As regards merchandise, they were at all times more or less disheartened by adverse circumstances. We have shown reason to believe that they were in a forlorn condition when they arrived on the coast of the Konkan since they lost every thing they had in the ship-wreck. They were then in a great dilemma even as to how their lives would be saved in the strange land, if the natives of the Konkan should take them to be spies or for other causes prove adverse to them. They could not enter into commercial transactions owing to want of funds, nor could they enter the state service since their touch or even their shadow would be considered defiling by the natives. They had to follow here the occupation which their forefathers had carried on independently in Palestine, and that too at first on hire. Had they ventured to attempt to borrow funds for that purpose, none would have been found to advance them. Who indeed would lend money to a handful of aliens who had neither credit nor even as yet an acquaintance with the people in their neighbourhood? During the subsequent days of their sojourn in the Konkan, they were frequently harried by Pindaries, Dacoits and other native predatory tribes. Their houses were very often plundered and burnt to ashes, and consequently they rarely possessed hereditary property and hence each generation had not unfrequently to begin every thing anew. They remained down the centuries as ignorant and as uneducated as the native inhabitants of the Konkan, who were fishermen, Kunbees, Agries, Mallees and Bhandaries. Moreover the Konkan was then a constant theatre of petty warfare between one local chief and another. As most of these small wars were accompanied with devastations and general destruction of property and lives, the Bene-Israel living in these provinces must have suffered in common with the rest of the in-inhabitants. The only circumstance that was favourable to the Bene-Israel in the Konkan was that there was no religious persecution either on the part of the natives of the Konkan or by the Mahomedan and Portuguese invaders. Hence our ancestors maintained their nationality intact, and were not forced into intermixture with the people in whose midst they dwelt for ages. It is surprising indeed to find that though originally (as their tradition runs) the considerable number with which they set sail for Indian shores was reduced to a mere handful of individuals, they nevertheless held

themselves distinct from the natives of India, and did not intermingle with them. This circumstance by itself is quite sufficient to indicate the strong love for the faith of their forefathers which has ever remained unabated amongst them.

Until the time of Raghoji Angria (1790—1838), none of the local rulers showed the least interest in the Bene-Israel community, nor did any native chief apparently possess the least information about these people. It was under the auspices of Raghoji and his minister Vinayek Purshuram Bivalkar that an enquiry was instituted into the religious creeds professed by the Mahomedans and the Bene-Israel, or Shanwar Telis ,on an occasion when they had gone as usual to bless the Angria Chief and his minister on the morning of Shilla-San i.e. Simhat Cohen. At this time the chief, it is said, ordered the commander of his battery to give a salute in honour of their holiday by firing a gun from his Fort which bore the name of Hirakote, and offered them Pan-Supari flowers and rose water, besides Rupees 5 for their funds. Mogulkhan Jemedar, the representative of the Mahomedan community at the place, requested one of the Mahomedan Munshis of Angria's court to give information about the Mahomedan religion. Dadji Nayek the principal member of the Churrikar family, who was the representative of the Bene-Israel community at Alibag, requested Shalom Banaji Jhiratkar and Samson Shapurkar, Kajis of the community, to supply similar information with regard to the Bene-Israel. Being unable to do so, they requested one Samuel Jacob Kehimkar to supply all the necessary information. He gave this information and it was taken down by Raoji Gokhle, one on the Secretaries of the chief. In the information given by the Mahomedan Munshi, among other things, there was a statement that the great Prophet Mahomad, the founder of their religion, was in a certain constellation called "Kootub" for myriads of years long before the creation of the world. Samuel Jacob Kehimkar on the other hand, gave a minute account of his race from the creation of the world. His account narrated how the world was created, and contained short sketches of the lives of Adam and Eve, the names of their most important descendants, and the most famous incidents of subsequent history, in a chronological order. The two sets of information were

read to the Angria and his minister before a Darbar held for that purpose on one Sunday morning. After the reading of both the accounts was finished, the Angria and his minister seems to have been greatly pleased with the Bene-Israel and were surprised to find that the account of the Shanwar Tellis as derived from their Scriptures was so interesting and possessed a continuous chain of narrative reaching from the very creation down to the latest times. The Angria and his minister being greatly pleased with this account, the former asked his secretaries what reward they should confer on the Bene-Israel, who had given such a graphic and clear account of the early history of his people. Sudoba Bhao, one of the secretaries, informed the chief that this Bene-Israel was in the employ of the English people and that the only favour the chief could bestow upon him would be the exemption from house tax. Accordingly, Samuel Jacob Kehimkar was exempted from the payment of any tax for his house at Alibag so long as it should continue in his possession.

The districts where our ancestors first landed and lived, constantly passed from one ruler to another during some 2000 years, and the inhabitants of these provinces had to struggle against a number of vicissitudes which followed in the train of constant changes. The Bene-Israel, along with other people residing in these districts, could not avoid being affected by these vicissitudes. It will have been observed that some of the places forming the scenes of actual battles, such as Alibag, Thul, Revadanda etc., are among the chief centres of Bene-Israel abode. Such changes of fortune would therefore doubtless cause it to happen that the Bene-Israel would be in very good circumstances at one time and in a very miserable condition at another.

Some of the Bene-Israel families were invested with responsible offices, such as those of commodores, Mheters ,etc. during the supremacy of the Ahmednuggur dynasty and the rule of the Peshwa and the authority of the Angria. With the decline of these powers, as a natural result, the proseprity of some of the Bene-Israel families came to an end.

CHAPTER IV.

The Present Social Condition of the Bene-Israel

As the Bene-Israel differ from the people around them in physiognomy, bodily structure and general appearance, they can easily be distinguished in the midst of a multitude of others. The typical Bene-Israel is from five feet to five and a half feet in height and is usually well-built. The mien of a Ben-Israel is frequently warlike. The complexion of his face is fair and his body generally well-proportioned and tending to be spare rather than corpulant. His features are usually somewhat elongated, and wear a pleasing expression of intelligence and of firmness of character. His nose is straight, his lips are thin and his cheeks full and fair. The colour of his eyes is dark brown. His hair is of a deep black. Some, it is true, possess a somewhat lightly coloured hair; but this is generally to be seen in children. The Bene-Israel serving in the army and many of the Bene-Israel residents of Bombay and Poona wear their hair one or two inches long, while others shave their heads weekly, according to the custom of the country. They do not wear a Shendi (or tuft) on the crown of their heads as the Hindus do; but carefully preserve a lock on each of the temples. They have a thick and short beard with whiskers extending from the end of one lock to that of the other, but only a short moustache. The insteps of their feet are generally high, and they do not tattoo their bodies like their Hindu neighbours.

Bene-Israel women are generally good-looking and fair. Though in some cases beauty has faded owing to poverty, their original Israelitish features survive. They can easily be recognized from Hindu women. They are very active and have lively black eyes. They have straight noses and thin lips. Their hair is black, but

occasionally of a somewhat light colour. The insteps of their feet are high. Like Hindu women they wear their hair tressed up in a knot behind their heads; but they do not tattoo their bodies like their Hindu neighbours.

The Bene-Israel have adopted Marathi as their mother-tongue, and use it both at home and abroad. They speak that language with the same provincial peculiarities with which it is spoken by those neighbours in the Konkan among whom their ancestors first took shelter, viz. the Koonbis, the Angris, the Malis, the Bhandaries, etc. There is not however much difference between the dialect they use and pure Marathi. Their pronounciation of words is in some respect incorrect or defective. They use "r" for "d" as in the cases of Labad" (liar) "Labar", "Ghoda" (horse) Ghora, Gadi (carriage) Gary; but those that are educated speak correctly. The family of Ashtamkar Mheter of Ashtami is wellknown for speaking pure Marathi (Marathi which is equally good as that used by Brahmins in the midst of whom they have been living for several generations). Some Arabic words have crept into use amongs the Bene-Israel : Abba (father) Allum (world) Kullam (word) Uja (wash) etc. These words were borrowed by them from Mahomedan rulers just as many English words have been more recently adopted into Marathi. The original language of their first ancestors was, of course, Hebrew, and in this tongue they pray; but only a few of them understand it, though many can read it fluently.

Generally speaking the Bene-Israel are a markedly well-behaved and useful class of the community, and are hard-working, sober, loyal, diligent and industrious. Their failings tend in the direction of quarrelsomeness and revengefulness. In respect of injuries they are not forgetful and forgiving. Their diligence and industry, again, too often do not bring in much good to them, as they do not aim at improvement in the occupations they follow. Want of education is the real cause why such a state of things is found to exist among them. Some of them serve as day-labourers on wages. By character they are not addicted, in general, to vice, and we are glad to be able to state that most of them are engaged in one kind of honest labour or another. The Bene-Israel as a class are straight forward in all

their dealings. It is regretfully to be owned that many among them are fond of drinking. They tend to be irascible generally in temperament; but not a few are to be found amongst them who are mild in disposition. They are also as a class pleasingly given to hospitality.

On their first landing in India the Bene-Israel were in a miserable plight, and had therefore at first to depend on the good will of those amongst whom they came, for their subsistence, while their crushed and disheartened spirit, coupled with their general ignorance of trade, increased their difficulties; they had therefore to fall back on the humbler avocations of husbandry and oil-pressing which they had followed in their own mother-country, and which are still followed by many of their descendants in the Konkan. Some of them have however, latterly opened grocers' shops; again others have turned cart-drivers, but very few of the Bene-Israel have taken up other trades adopted by so many of their compatriots in other lands. Those who came to Bombay within the last century have taken to carpentry, masonry, fitting and turning and work as day labourers; but what they get now-a-days is barely sufficient for their subsistance owing to the immense increase in the prices of daily necessities. Some in Bombay are contractors, and are engaged in constructing and repairing public and private buildings. The educated are employed as clerks, draftsmen, telegraph signallers, hospital assistants, teachers, printing compositors in government, railway and mercantile establishments. Medical practitioners number at present but four, one of whom obtained the M.B. degree of the Durham University, and has been practising at Ahmedabad; while the three others secured the degrees of L.M. and S. from the Bombay University, after completing their course in the Grant Medical College. Three as Engineers hold diplomas of L.C.E. of the University of Bombay, having gone through the course in the Poona College of Science, and one of these is employed as an Executive Engineer in the Mysore State; while the other is practising as a Civil Engineer in Bombay and the third is employed in the Public Works Department. Two others have obtained their degrees of B.A. and L.L.B. of the University of Bombay, and of these one is a Subordinate Judge; while the other is practising as a Vakil of the High-Court, Appelate

Side. There are also six graduates in Arts. There are but few money lenders amongst the Bene-Israel. As land-holders, some cultivate their land themselves, while others let it to tenants. They trade in the produce of their fields ,and send especially rice for sale to Bombay. The wives of husbandmen and oil-pressers help their husbands in cultivating the fields and in working at the oil-press; but neither the wives of crafts-men nor those of the well-to-do class do any thing to add much to the family income. A by no means unimportant number of the Bene-Israel have enlisted in the Bombay Army.

Like those of the middle class of Hindus, the houses of Bene-Israel living in the Konkan and the Habshi and Pant Sachew territories consist generally of a ground floor only, and are built with bricks or with wattle and daub walls, and have thatched or tiled roofs. They have a verandah of about eight or ten feet in front, sitting and sleeping rooms in the middle, and a kitchen at the back. In the compound at the back of the house there are a few coconut or other trees, and a shed which is used either as an oil-press or as a shelter for cattle which are kept for agricultural and oil-pressing purposes.

The houses of the Bene-Israel in Poona and Tanna consist generally of one storey and are built with burnt bricks put together with mud, but the joints of the bricks of the outer side of the walls are plastered with chunam (or mortar) while the inner side of the wall is plastered with mud and white washed with chunam. These houses have three or four apartments, one of which, next to the veranda of the ground floor, is used as a general sitting room Another is employed as a sleeping room, and the third as a kitchen; a little beyond it there is an enclosure with or without other houses, and a few trees. The arrangement of the rooms on the upper floor is just the same as that on the ground floor except that the space covered by the Veranda on the ground floor is added to the hall in the upper storey. These houses have tiled roofs. There are only a dozen or two houses owned by the Bene-Israel at each of these stations. Others live in hired houses.

In Bombay the houses of the Bene-Israel are from one to three stories high and are strongly built with chanum and bricks and

have tiled roofs. There were formerly from 200 to 300 houses in the ownership of these people in Bombay, but now there are no more than 35 houses belonging to them, since many of their families have become reduced to poverty. On the ground floor of these houses, there is but one verandah, and one or two godowns or warehouses for storing commodities belonging to merchants. On the first storey, there is a general hall or sitting room from 15 to 30 feet square, and three to six rooms, each about 12 feet square. The arrangement on the second and third storey is just the same as that on the first. The Landlords or the House-owners usually live in a part of the house, while the rest is let out to tenants. The Bene-Israel have, as in a Hindu house, copper and brass vessels, which are so nicely scoured daily that it is easy to mistake them for utensils made of some superior metal. This is due to the special love of the Bene-Israel women for cleanliness. There are also one or two earthen chatties to hold water for drinking purposes. A grindstone, a slab and roller for grinding the ingredients of curry condiments etc., a wooden mortar and pestle, low wooden stools, bedsteads, a chair or two and a few miscellaneous articles, complete the furniture of a middle class family. In most of the houses in Bombay, Poona and Tanna, the articles mentioned above, and a few more of English style, are to be seen; but poor families have to be content with only earthen chatties. In well-to-do families we find tables, cupboards, wardrobes, picture frames, moon lamps etc., in addition. Some of the Bene-Israel in Bombay, Poona and Tanna have one or two male or female servants of the either Maratha or Bene-Israel caste. The Bene-Israel farmers who live on the coast, and who have large farms of their own to manage, possess, also cattle for ploughing their fields, and employ male and female servants of the Maratha caste to assist them. The Bene-Israel never employ as servants the Mahar and Mang castes, who use as articles of food dead beasts and fowls, a touch of which alone defiles a Bene-Israel.

The only peculiar article not mentioned above, which is found in the Bene-Israel houses is the Mezuza which is placed upon the door-posts of the houses as commanded in Deut. Chapt. VI. 9. and Chap. XI. 20.

Devout Jews or Bene-Israel never go out of or come into their houses without kissing the Mezuza.

The custom of the fixing of the Mezuza to the door-post is an ancient one among the Jews. The Bene- Israel did not observe this custom when they were in religious ignorance; but since the time they have again received religious education almost all of them have observed it.

The articles of food which the Bene-Israel use are rice, wheat, pulse, millet, vegetables, fruits of various sorts, seasamum seed oil, butter, potatoes, salt etc. Unleavened bread, which is more economical than any other food, is the chief article of their diet. Their meals are very frugal, and generally consist of rice-bread and rice. Fish is generally used, while meat is only served at times. In short, there can be no doubt that they continue to use the same simple food of which their ancestors have been used to partake ever since their immigration into India, and it reflects great credit on them that they have not adopted more luxurious modes of living. "Ibn Ezra, a celebrated Jewish poet, grammarian, commentator, theologian, mathematician and astronomer who lived between 1092—1167 seems to have extended his travels to Persia and India; and Abudirha in his commentary on the Haggadah, tells us that Ibn Ezra came to India as a captive, and that the fare which he and his fellow sufferers received while in prison, consisted chiefly of unleavened bread; and he concludes from this fact, that this kind of food being considered more economical, was for that reason given to the Israelites by Pharaoh, and that this is meant by the words of the Haggadah : "Such is the bread of affliction, which our fore-fathers ate in Egypt." Ibn Ezra seems, however, to have liked the frugal Indian meals, at which no meat was served; they were vegetarians; their rice-bread is highly spoken of by our traveller." *) The Bene-Israel drink water, milk, tea and coffee; as well as liquor, both country-made and of European manufacture, but only in the evening at the time of supper. Besides these they use meat, fowl and fish with the restriction stated in Leviticus XI. 3-7 and Deut. XIV. 6-8. As the ancestors of the Bene-Israel lived among the Hindus, who considered the killing of an ox or a cow as an abdomination, it is clear that they slaughtered only goats and sheep; and so habitual has this become to

*) The Introduction to the commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah by Dr. Friedlander Vol. 1. p. 19.

them that even now most of the Bene-Israel do not like killing other animals.

As regards birds, those whose names are enumerated as unclean for food in Lev. XI. 13. are not eaten. But when the Bene-Israel were in religious darkness they even then did not eat those birds which held their prey in their feet, and had their crop near the throats. The usual and favourite birds which the Bene-Israel are accustomed to kill for food are poultry with which some of them use butter.*)

Moreover the Bene-Israel do not eat dead animals and fowls nor those that are torn by wild animals. They also do not use for food lame, blind or blemished animals and fowls, nor do they eat fat, nor do they use blood, which they are careful to draw out before the meat is dressed by steeping it first for half an hour in water and then keeping it for an hour or so in salt, with which it is well rubbed all over. It is then placed on something slanting, so as to let the blood which the salt draws, run off. The salt is then washed off with clean water, and afterwards the meat is dressed. Before killing an animal the following grace is said : "Blessed art thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us with thy commandments and commanded us concerning the killing of animals." But when the Bene-Israel were in religious ignorance they had forgotten this grace. They only repeated the "Beshem Adonai" meaning "In the name of God" when they killed the animal. After slaughtering the animal, its blood is spilt on the ground and coverd with earth, and its internal organs are examined. If its heart, liver and lungs are found to be sound and healthy, it is pronounced to be fit for food. If any of these organs are diseased, the animal is declared to be unfit for food. This internal examination was a thing perfectly unheard of when the Bene-Israel were in religious darkness. Their

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*) במקומו של ר' יוסי ה ג ל י ל י היו אוכלים בשר עוף בחלב. (יבמות י"ד.)

In the place of R. Yossi the G a l i l e a n meat of fowls was served with milk (Bab. Talmud, Yebomoth 14 a).

This passage might form an additional argument in support of the author's theory of the Galilean origin of the Bene-Israel. (I.O.).

ancestors seem to have been more careful in instructing their children that "They should not seethe a kid in its mother's milk", and it is supposed that it was on this ground that they did not eat butter along with meat of goats and sheep which were their favourite articles of food, but used sweet oil in its stead. The Bene-Israel abhor swine's flesh so much so that "a pig-eater"—"Suvar Khav" is their grossest term of abuse.

Neither did the ancestors of the Bene-Israel nor do their descendants ever eat the flesh of beasts and fowls killd by people of other denominations. They appointed Shochets (slaughterers) from among themselves, but they did not know the rules of killing beasts and fowls which the authors of the Talmud had promulgated in the fifth or sixth century of the Christian era. In olden times they did not remove all the tendons from the flesh of the beasts and fowls as they do now, but they only removed the "Sciatic nerve".

Notwithstanding the well-known fact that the use of blood, even that of beasts and fowls is strictly prohibited to the Bene-Israel, they have been in other countries charged with using the blood of Gentiles mixed with the unleavened bread of Passover; but charges of this kind have always been proved and will ever be proved totally false. It is indeed most surprising that an accusation of this kind should ever be laid at the doors of the Jews by the people of civilized countries, and in the nineteenth century. Since the arrival of the Bene-Israel in India, no one has ventured to accuse them of anything of this nature but the editor of the Bombay Cassid a Gujurathi paper for Mahomedans, in his issue of the 19th May 1882 ventured to blemish the fair name of the Jews and Bene-Israel in the following manner :—

"An evil custom amongst the Jews and Their fondness of the blood of the Mahomedans.

"Our readers will be struck with horror at the above heading. There is an evil custom prevalent amongst the Jews which is likely to provoke the bitterest animosity of the Mohamedans. On a certain holiday of this people, which falls in the month of April, it is not only considered as a meritorious deed, but it is one which is supposed to have a religious sanction to sell amongst the Jews bread prepared of the flour mixed with the flesh and blood of a Mahomedan who is killed on that day.

"In ancient time this custom was much in vogue and there was a great agitation about it. But in course of time this custom was left unobserved, and now the Jews have adopted a curious practice instead. A red fruit is placed in a dish which is fictitiously supposed to be "Mahomed"; it is then pierced with a fork or a knife and the juice trickling out of it, is considered "Mahomed's blood", and is tested by one and all the members present. That fruit is then cut into pieces and boiled."

"We give below what we have heard about this custom in Bassorah. This holiday of the Jews fell on the 6th of April last. In the evening a Mahomedan boy about 13 years old—one of the subjects of the Shah of Persia—entered, on some business, the house of a Jew named Nahamin; but he never returned. The Jew slaughtered him and distributed his blood amongst the members of his community the next day. The chief officer would have been informed of this, had he not been away from the city. Yet Mussabeg and Syed Hadi, the subordinate officers arrested the Jew, and put him into prison; but as he offered large bribes, he was set at liberty."

Owing to the above publication, there was every possibilty of a riot being raised against the Jews and Bene-Israel; for the minds of the Mahomedans were quite stirred up and they had commenced murmuring at the Bene-Israel. In the meantime Mr. Solomon David Sassoon caused Mr. Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurker to serve a notice to the editor of the paper asking him to prove the charge brought against the Jews and the Bene-Israel, or to tender an apology for the same. But ere long there would have been a riot against the Jews and the Bene-Israel similar to the one which the Mohamedans raised against the Parsis some years ago, had not the editor of "Israel" the late Mr. Samuel Kehimkar, published in his paper that the charge was a false one. Moreover he ventured to go personally with his old uncle the late Mr. Shalom Samuel Kehimkar to the Kaji or Molvi of the Jumma Musjid, and convinced him that according to the Mosaic law the Jews and Bene-Israel were prohibited from using the blood even of beasts and fowls, and that it was impossible therefore that they would ever think of using human blood. In the meantime the Editor of the Bombay Cossid showed his regret for the publication in the following way.

"A custom amongst the Jews.

"On the authority of a letter from Bassorah we published in our issue of the 19th of May, an account of a custom supposed to be prevalent amongs the Jews. With reference to it, Mr. Joseph Ezekiel on behalf of the community, served us with a notice to the effect that no custom of this sort has ever been observed by the Jews or Bene-Israel and stating that we therefore should apologize for the false publication. If the contents of the latter be true and if the Jews or Bene-Israel do not follow the practice described in the letter from Bassorah, we not only express our regret for the publication, but congratulate the Jews and Bene-Israel on the fact that there never existed such a cusom, even in ancient times, so calculated to provoke the Mahomedans. We had no other motive in giving publicity to it than to inform the public who were ignorant till then of a custom supposed to be prevalent amongst the Jews and Bene-Israel. We are indeed very sorry if the feelings of the Jews and Bene-Israel community are thereby offended; and if, with reference to this, a Jew or Bene-Israel should be pleased to forward any correspondence we will gladly publish it in our Journal."

The Bene-Israel in Bombay, Poona and Tanna generally take a breakfast consisting of tea and bread or of Kongi made of sago or wheaten flour, while those that live in the Konkan take porridge early in the morning, between six and seven. They have two meals a day in addition, a morning meal between 9 and 10, and an evening meal between 7 and 9. Some people also take a meal between 1 and 2 in the after-noon. Men and women eat separately, both at home and in public and private parties, the men first and the women afterwards. Children eat sometimes with their fathers and sometimes with their mothers. On fast days they do not eat or drink or smoke Wel-to-do and middle class Bene-Israel have at every meal one or two dishes either of fish or flesh or fowl ,and a dish of vegetables, while on Sabbath and holidays they add fish, flesh and fowl; but fish is not generally used with meat. The poor seldom taste animal food except on festival days, their articles of food on week days being rice, curry of fish and boiled pulse. In April and May before the rainy season sets in, all classes alike, well-to-do, middle class and poor, lay up stores of grain, pulse, onion, firewood, spices, oil etc. against the

three or four months following. The ordinary monthly food expenses of a household of six persons, a man and his wife with two children and two relatives or dependants, living well but not extravagantly, would be, for a well-to-do family, from about Rupees 50—60; for a middle class family Rs. 40—50; and for a poor family about Rupees 30.

Among the Bene-Israel the chief occasions for public feasts are those of marriage, the making or performance of a vow, and Jaharat or funeral obesquies. Feasts in honour of the birth of a son or of his circumcision are now-a-days seldom given. The feasts are either morning entertainments ,taking place between the hours of 9 and 12, or evening entertainments held between 7 and 10 o'clock. The guests are both men and women, one or two or more from each house. Sometimes relations only are invited; at others both relations and other members of the community. The day on which the period of mourning is ended, a dinner is given to those who have attended the funeral of the deceased, if the mourner can afford to do so; while on the marriage day the whole community is invited to a feast if the man can afford to give it, or otherwise only relatives and select friends form a dinner party. Before invitations for a feast are sent round, a list of guests to be invited is first of all prepared, which is then handed over to the Shamash or beadle of the synagogue for his guidance in inviting the persons named in the list. He goes from house to house, stands at the door and calls the householder by name and gives him the invitation. All accept it, whether they mean to go or not. The host gets the cooking pots for the feast from the stock of the community purchased out of synagogue funds ,and cooking is managed either by hired cooks or by female relatives and acquaintances. As the guests come in, they leave their shoes in the verandah and are led by the host to the place of the repast, which is covered either with carpets or mats, supplied sometimes from the community stock. A place is reserved for the leading members, and in particular for the Hazan or the Reader of the Synagogue and for the Kaji. There are no ministers attached to the Bene-Israel synagogues. After all the guests are assembled, the ceremony commences. It if is a Jaharat, Alpha Betha

i.e. Pslams from CXIX — CXXXV are read, and then Hashkaba *) or the prayer for the dead, is made; and afterwards the Kadish **) is recited, which is said by the mourners. Keriyath Shema is repeated by all i.e. the unity of God is acknowledged. But if it is a marriage Feast, Elijah the Prophet is invoked. If it is a vow feast V e i t e n l e k h a, i.e. the verses of blessing, are recited. This being done, china plates filled with rice and a few rice or wheat flour cakes, with a sufficient quantity of mutton for each man, served either in china or Bunyan leaf cups, are brought in by the persons who have been requested to help. This description applies to general parties. In private parties the guests are served on a grand scale. After the feast is served, one of the servers brings in a ewer with a copper pot full of water to wash the hands of the Kaji, Reader and others; and also a plate containing three or four pieces of wheat-bread, and a cellar with some salt in it. The party having washed their hands, the following grace is said — "Blessed art thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe who hast sanctified us with thy commandments and commanded us to cleanse our hands." The reader or the Kaji then holds a couple of bread-cakes in each of his hands, and commences saying in Hebrew, "The eyes of all wait hopefully upon Thee, and Thou givest them their food in due season", (Psalm CXLV. 15.) when the guests say, "Thou openest Thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Then the Reader or the Kaji says the grace : "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe who bringest forth bread from the earth;" when all say "Amen". The Reader or the Kaji who says the grace then breaks the bread, dips it into salt and eats it. He then breaks more pieces of bread and dips them into salt as before, and hands them over to the servers, who give a piece to each of the guests. After mutton-curry has been poured over the rice and cakes they commence eating, and the contents of one

*) A Prayer for the well-being of the soul of the deceased that it may find Divine mercy when appearing before the Supreme Judge and a prayer for the comfort and relief of the mourners.

**) Kaddish merely expresses the mourners' resignation to the will of the Almighty, and their conviction that He is the only Being that is to be worshipped.

ALLIANCE ISRAELITE UNIVERSELLE

dish are partaken of by two or three guests, but this practice is now-a-days disliked by some, and they give a plate to each man. It is worth noticing here that the use of either country-liquor or European liquor is strictly prohibited in public feasts or parties, in accordance with a rule made by the community of Bombay on the 3rd July 1865; and this rule is observed both by the Bene-Israel living in Bombay and in outstations. Credit for the discontinuance of liquor and wine from public parties or feasts is due to Mr. Abraham Daniel Pezarkar and his coadjutors, who appealed to the Bombay community against the practice in question some ten years before the date given above. The satement made by the Gazetteer that the "host, after eating has gone on for some time, asks the Elders if they think it safe to allow drinking", cannot be borne out for the rule already mentioned is very strictly enforced. Even in private parties where drinking is allowed, it precedes the eating. How can it then be possible that it should have been served in public feasts and parties, and that, too, after eating has gone on for some time?

When all have finished eating, the Kaji or the Reader repeats the grace after meals, as given in the Hebrew ritual. The reader then tastes some salt and sends it round to the guests, each of whom tastes a little of it. After distribution of Pan i.e. betelnut and leaves the party breaks up. The dishes are then taken into the inner part of the house, where they are cleansed, and the women are served with a meal shortly after. But there are no seniors or readers this time to bless the food. A feast for 50 guests costs Rupees 25—30.

The Bene-Israel have changed their dress with their country. Their present dress is partly Mussulman and partly Hindu. It consists of a turban such as is worn by the Hindus and folded like that of their Maratha neighbours, (but for which now-a-days a velvet, or a Turkish or Persian cap is mostly substituted), a Hindu coat, waist-coat of either Hindu or Mussulman fashion, a shirt of Mahomedan fashion, trousers of Mahomedan fashion or waist cloth of Hindu fashion, and country shoes or sandals, called vahanas. Native shoes called Apashai, as remarked by the Bombay Gazetteer in vol. XVIII part 1 p. 511, are generally used by those who still live in the Konkan. A few of the Bene-Israel of late have adopted English cut coats, pants and boots and shoes. The

ceremonial and festive dress of the Bene-Israelite is the same. The practice of wearing ornaments by the male sex is fast dying out.

The indoor dress of the Bene-Israel consists of a skull cap, a waist-coat or a shirt, and a waist cloth or trousers. Slippers and a flannel waist coat for cold weather are worn by those who can afford to do so.

The Bombay Gazetteer has described the wardrobe of the Bene-Israel under three classes, rich, middle class and poor; but we differ from him in the point of the rich class, which the Bene-Israel can hardly boast of possessing at the present day. There were some rich men in the past generation, such as Dada Captain Commandant, Sirdar Bahadur Mussaji Ballaji, formerly Native Commandant Ghaut Police Corps Tanna; Bapuji Doodkar of Revadanda, Esba Essoobji formerly treasurer of the old synagogue fund; Bapuji Gudkar and others. We shall therefore designate the so called "rich" class as "well-to-do", and the wardrobe of man of this class generally consists of the following articles either of the old or new-fashioned dress (their value is set opposite them).

OLD-FASHIONED DRESS.

6 Coats of Long-cloth at Rupees.	1—8—0 each	—	Rs. 9—0—0
6 Waist-coats of cotton at Rupee	1—0—0 "	—	Rs. 6—0—0
6 Shirts of cotton at Rupee	1—0—0 "	—	Rs. 6—0—0
6 Trousers of cotton at Rupee	1—0—0 "	—	Rs. 6—0—0
2 Caps silk at Annas	0—8—0 "	—	Rs. 1—0—0
1 Turban		—	Rs.15—0—0
1 Silk Trouser		—	Rs. 6—0—0
2 Pairs of shoes		—	Rs. 4—0—0.
			Rs.53—0—0.

NEW-FASHIONED DRESS.

2 Cashmere Jerseys at Rupees	8—0—0 each	—	Rs.16—0—0
2 Cashmere pants at Rupees	5—0—0 "	—	Rs.10—0—0
6 Cotton trousers at Rupees	1—0—0 "	—	Rs. 6—0—0
6 Cotton shirts at Rupees	1—8—0 "	—	Rs. 9—0—0
2 Caps at Rupees	1—8—0 "	—	Rs. 3—0—0
2 Cotton coats at Rupees	1—8—0 "	—	Rs. 3—0—0
2 Pairs of shoes or boots at Rs.	4—0—0 "	—	Rs. 8—0—0
			Rs.55—0—0.

The wardrobe of the poor cannot exceed Rs. 5 or 6. He has at best a cotton coat or two, one or two waist coats and one or tow pairs of trousers or one or two Punchas, i.e. waist cloths of inferior material.

The Bene-Israel women do not dress like Koonbee women, as stated by the Bombay Gazetteer at p. 511 vol. XVII part 1; for the Koonbee women wear their Sari as far as the' knees only. The Bene-Israel women on the other hand dress themselves like Brahmin or Purbhu women, as will be seen from the illustration we give in this volume of a Bene-Israel lady. Their indoor and outdoor dress is almost the same, except that he cotton Sari and bodice with silk borders may be a little more valuable than that worn at home. Their holiday dress almost invariably consists of silk Saries and bodices presented to them by their husbands and parents at the time of their marriages. The Sari is from 8—10 yards long and about four and a half feet broad and is worn in the following manner: Its one end is tied round the waist lenghtwise, while the other is passed over the bosom, left arm and head in such a way as to let it fall like a mantle on the back and right shoulder so as to cover decently the upper part of the body, while the middle of the Sari is folded into plaits the upper end of which is thrust at the front of the waist within the end of the Sari tied round the body. The middle portion of the lower end of the plaits, which hangs as far as the ankle, is turned from between the feet at the back, where it is plaited and tucked behind the waist in a neat and decent way. On ordinary occasions when going out of the house, Bene-Israel women do not draw over their heads shawls or silk-bordered waist cloths or Dhotars as stated by the Gazetteer. It is only on festive occasions that some of them wear shawls or some similar coverings on their back. The Bene-Israel women wear glass bangles. They also wear gold or silver bangles if they can afford to do so. They wear nose-rings, but some of the educated ladies have done away with them. The practice of wearing silver chains on the feet is becoming obsolete. They wear ear-rings but not head ornaments, which are generally worn by women till they become mothers. They wear a necklace, which is

called Lacha not Mangalsutra, as stated by the Gazetteer, though this custom is borrowed from the people among whom they settled. Among the Bene-Israel widows are stripped of their glass bangles, nose-rings and Lachas or necklace. The wardrobe of the Bene-Israel woman of a well-to-do class (excepting the silk Saries and bodices presented to her at the time of her marriage by her husband and parents) consists of 4 Saries and 4 Bodices a year, which would not cost more than Rs. 40 for the former and Rs. 8 or 10 for the latter, and her ornaments value from Rupees 500—1000. There may be one or two isolated cases in which the jewelry of the woman may be as high in value as Rs. 2,000. The wardrobe of the middle class woman (excepting her marriage dress) consists of 2 Saries and 2 bodices, the former of which cost Rs. 10 and the latter Rs. 2. Her ornaments value from Rs. 200—400; while the wardrobe of the poor woman is of 2 Patuls and 2 bodices which cost Rupees 3 and one respectively. As for ornaments, she has not even a trace of such.

The dress of a Bene-Israel male or female child below two or three years of age, consists of about two skull caps and about 3 or 4 short sleeved cotton frocks. Its ceremonial dress is a Jari or a brocade cap and a silk frock, presented either by his maternal grand father or purchased by the father. But when the child is above three and below ten, it, if a boy, has about five or six frocks, five or six waist-coats and about the same number of cotton trousers. His holiday or ceremonial dress consists of a silk coat and trousers and a jari or brocade cap and shoes; and that of a girl, of a couple of skirts, a couple of Polkas and the same number of trousers, and a Phudki i.e. a coloured cotton shawl. Her holiday dress is of silk material if she be of a well-to-do class; while the dress of a middle class girl is made of a cotton cloth of a superior kind. The dress of poor class girls consists of one or two trousers and one or two frocks of a coarser kind. Ornaments are seldom worn by boys, since the fact that for the sake of these fine ornaments the life of the child is endangered *) has been fully

*) The author probably refers to the piercing of the ears (I. O.).

brought home to the minds of the Bene-Israel parents in general. The girls of the well-to-do parents have Ketak, Kevda Chandrakore and Koolki as head ornaments, Zanjuds and Todas as feet ornaments and silver or gold bangles as hand ornaments; but these they only wear on marriage or ceremonial occasions, when accompanied by their parents. Girls of the middle class have but one or two of the ornaments mentioned above; while those of the poor class do not even dream of them. The yearly expenditure on account of clothes of a boy of a well-to-do family is from Rs.10—25, for a middle class boy from Rs. 5—10 and for a boy of a poor family from Rs. 2—5. For a girl of a well-to-do family the annual expenditure on account of her clothes is from Rs. 10—15; for a girl of the middle class family it is from Rs. 5—10, and for a girl of a poor family it averages from Rupees 2—5.

All the ordinary duties of the household, such as grinding corn, pounding rice in a wooden mortar, husking it, cooking food etc., are performed by the women. Well-to-do families have a servant or two at their disposal to help them in their household occupations; while the middle and poor classes have no servants, — on the contrary they have not only to look after their own affairs, but commonly also to do some additional piece-work on hire, such as carding, spinning, grinding, husking. Being busily engaged in the management of their own household affairs, they are perfect strangers to idleness. According to the opinion of the Bene-Israel, it is the duty of men to earn money and that of women to spend it very frugally, so that a small portion of the income may be laid by. A portion of the time of the Bene-Israel women is therefore spent in buying and fetching things like rice, fuel etc. from the market, and in bringing water from the well or from the Municipal water taps. They also sew the ordinary clothes required by their husbands and children, keep their homes clean and tidy, wash their own and their childrens' clothes. Besides doing these things, women of the poorer class bring some work from outside, and make money thereby, so that what Solomon the Wise says about a virtuous woman is fully applicable to many a Bene-Israel housewife : "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her and he shall not lack again.

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."

The labouring class of the Bene-Israel community attend their work from morning till evening; while those in Government and mercantile offices attend their work from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Those of the independent classes, which are to be found almost exclusively in the Konkan, look after their fields, oarts and shops from morning till evening. Government pensioners after retiring from service generally pass their time in well-earned repose, or sometimes are engaged in making purchases of articles necessary for their families.

The children of this class attend some school where no fees are taken, if there is one near their home; and only a few of them, who can afford it, attend Government schools where they have to pay fees varying from annas two to Rupees four. Few of them continue their studies beyond the age of 15 and 16. They then take up some employment to help their parents; while a greater number of children have, on account of the poverty of their parents, to leave the school very early and join a carpenter's workshop, either in the Railway or in some private workshop, or to join some Mill as day labourers on poor salaries of Rupees 5 or 6 a month.

The present condition of the Bene-Israel is deplorable. There are a few well-to-do men among them, but the majority are daily sinking further into poverty, owing to the want of education among them; and thus they cannot keep pace with the keen competition going on at present. They are one of the backwardest races in point of education, which the philanthropic body of the Anglo-Jewish Association has ever since April 1881 undertaken to impart to them; and the reason of this is that they are struggling life and soul for their maintenance.

There is a practice in vogue among the Bene-Israel from time immemorial of giving a bill or letter of Divorce in case of adultery, and is ,no doubt ,a custom based upon Deut. XXIV; for, without such a document no marriage can be legally dissolved. As the Bene-Israel did not know Hebrew in their dark ages, they wrote these documents in their adopted vernacular; but some unscrupulous people say that divorces written in other than the Hebrew language are not valid, and therefore they charge the Bene-Israel with relinquishing their wives without divorces. But will any reasonable

man admit this argument as tenable ? Moreover, among the Bene-Israel divorces are very rare. A woman is only divorced when the charge of adultery is proved against her by the husband, and instances of this kind are very few. Had not this time-honoured custom of divorce been in vogue among the Bene-Israel, there would not have occurred the agitation there did in the community at Bombay, Alibag and in other places, some years back at the remarriage of the wife of one Succoba Bhastekar of Palli in the Pant Pashew territory with one David Dhokerkar of Bombay, which was solemnized in 1853 at Revadanda in Aglayachi Wadi by some unscrupulous persons without first adopting the expedient of getting a bill of divorce from the first husband of the bride. The whole community at the place was threatened with a ban of excommunication for not preventing the marriage, and in not showing their abhorrence before and after the act was perpetrated. But after a sharp and heated correspondence between the Bene-Israel residents of Bombay and those of Revadanda, the leading parties that were privy to the remarriage were excommunicated for a year, after which they were readmitted into the community, the culprit being made to pay Rs. 150 as compensation to the woman's first husband, who then gave the bill of divorce; while the accomplices were fined Rs. 5 or 10 each.

Y e b o o m means the obligation of marrying the childless widow of a deceased brother, and is founded on Deut. XXV 5—6. This practice does not prevail among the Bene-Israel; but the reasons for its disappearance among them are not far to seek. An occasion for its performance probably never arose in the lifetime of the first two or three generations after the immigration of the people into India; consequently their posterity were as a matter of course left in ignorance of this institution. The Bene-Israel cannot therefore be blamed for the absence of this social usage amongst them. Moreover, even had they come to know about it at a later period, it may readily be inferred that they may naturally not have liked to practice it as it had gone out of fashion. It was therefore but natural that in its stead a practice of adoption like that prevailling amongst Indians has been followed by the Bene-Israel.

The ceremony of C h a l i t z a h , or the taking off the shoe of the brother-in-law by the widow of the deceased brother, should

the former refuse to marry her, is founded on Deut. XXV 7—10. This institution, though not exactly performed in the manner indicated there, is somewhat analogous to another practice which prevails among the Bene-Israel:*) Whenever a Bene-Israel widower married a widow, it was always the custom in former times to obtain the written consent of her late husband's brother beforehand, and even at the present time a verbal consent is indispensable. The practice is undoubtedly a relic of the old C h a l i t z a h.

The Bene-Israel, like all eastern nations, consider it a mark of Divine blessing to have children, and especially sons, while the absence of them is regarded as one of the severest of punishments (Gen. XVI. 2; Deut. VII. 14; 1 Sam. 1. 6; 2 Sam. VI.23; 2 Kings. IV.14; Is. XLVII. 9; Jer. XX.15. Ps. CXXVII. 3—5). In the case of childlessness, adopting is resorted to by those who wish that their name may not be forgotten in Israel. It is not, however, compulsory to adopt a son among the Bene-Israel, it being left entirely to the adoption of the childless couple. Adoption among Ben-Israel may take place either during the life-time of the husband or after his death. No consent of the relatives or the members of the family is necessary. Nor is it an essential condition that the child adopted should belong to the family of the adopter.

Bigamy and polygamy obtains to a certain extent amongst the Bene-Israel. If a man obtains no issue by his first marriage, he commonly marries a second time, but some people remarry without any cause. Provision for the maintenance and clothing etc. of the first wife is made whenever a Bene-Israel marries a second one. The first wife is provided with an income every month of from Rs. 5 to Rs. 25 or 30 according to the circumstances of the man, if both wives do not live harmoniously with each other. Besides the maintenance money, the first wife gets a couple of bodices, two or four Saries, bed sheets, mantles etc. This custom has prevailed among the Bene-Israel from very ancient times, and is analogous to the rule laid down in the Mishna Ketuboth VIII, 8.

When a husband and a wife do not agree with each other, the husband does not give a bill of divorce to the wife except in the case of adultery, nor does a woman seek to obtain a divorce,

*) Among Bene-Israel, bachelors never marry widows.

and she cannot re-marry. When the husband lives apart from his wife, he makes provision for her food etc. and keeps up his relation with her as her husband. Bene-Israel women feel it to be very immodest to live with another husband after they have been once married. Re-marriage is generally brought about only after the greatest amount of persuasion on the part of the parents and relatives of the widow who is to be re-married.

There has been a custom amongst the Bene-Israel from time immemorial that on the death of an intestate Bene-Israel all his property should be divided amongst his sons and widow or widows. If it should have received any accretion to it from the eldest son, he is entitled to a double share of it. The expenses of a daughter or daughters marriage, are borne by the estate. Daughters generally receive equal portions of dowry, articles af apparel and ornaments at the time of their marriage, unless the father becomes poor, and in that event daughters get unequal portions. This practice is analogous to what is described in Mishna, Ketuboth VI. 6. The amount of dowry, articles of apparel and ornaments varies from Rupees 50 to Rupees 500 or more according to the position of the father. The expenses of a daughter's marriage depend upon the means of her father, even during his life time ;and the sum which she receives for apparel does not exceed the figure given above.

If a Bene-Israel dies without any issue, his property goes to his widow; but some interested people have not unfrequently sought to deal a death-blow to this custom.

The property of the father is divided equally amongst his sons, as stated above. The daughters are not entitled to any moiety, but should the father die without male issue, his property passes to the daughters. Though this practice has been prevalent amongst the Bene-Israel from very ancient times, some interested persons have been known also to try to set aside that custom on a plea that the daughters have not married into the same family, as was done in the case of Zelophehad's daughters *).

The decision pronounced in the case of Zelophehad's daughters is very sound and judicious for it was not the wish of God that

*) Numbers XXVII. 1—11.

one tribe should be in possession of more land and another of less. But as no inheritances have been granted here in Hindoostan, the above decision can hardly be held as applicable to the Bene-Israel in the land of their adoption, where the self-acquired property both moveable and immovable must go to the daughter or daughters when the man dies without male issue and it is immaterial whether the daughters marry into their father's family or not.

In India whenever any question of disputed succession arises amongst Bene-Israel, it is settled in accordance with the principle laid down in the Indian Succession Act X of 1865. This act is applicable to all the Indian-born subjects except Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Mahomedans and Parsis.

We need not go into details concerning the vows made by the Bene-Israel or their women, as we have already given description of these in the first chapter of this work. We must, however, mention here that the Bene-Israel, being as we have in former pages shown reason for believing, descendants of the Hebrews who lived in the Northern Province of Palestine, naturally retain traces of the practice of making vows. This custom is one of exceedingly early origin, and its germs are to be found in most ancient times. The earliest mention of a vow occurs in the case of the Patriarch Jacob, (Gen. XXVIII. 20—22).

Vows are also mentioned in the book of Job. We further find an instance of this practice in the case of Hannah the wife of Elkanah, (I. Sam. II. 1—2). Many more instances of vows may be given from the Bible. The Mosaic Law did not introduce the practice of making vows but only regulated it. Vows were entirely voluntary; but when once made, they were regarded as compulsary, (Num. XIII). In like manner if an unmarried girl or a married woman made a vow and the father or the husband respectively heard of the vow and kept silent, the vow must de fulfilled; but should it be disallowed by him on the day he heard it, the vow would not stand good.

The rule of abstention from grape-juice or intoxicating drink by the Nazarite was not observed by the Bene-Israel. It appears from this that some of the rules must have been forgotten by them in their exile, owing to the loss of their Scriptures.

DOMESTIC LIFE

We now proceed to give an account of the domestic life of the Bene-Israel. Most of the ceremonies performed by our people at the time of birth, marriage and death conform to ceremonials described in the Bible. There has been undoubtedly, however, an admixture of local usages, and it is difficult to discover their exact origin. These local usages were abandoned on the rise of religious revival, though a few of them have still been retained by our people.

Among the Bene-Israel, parents take their daughters to their own home for the first confinement if they can meet all the ncesesary expenses. Otherwise the husband sends his wife for accouchment to her father's house at his own expense. All her subsequent deliveries take place at her husband's house. The reason why a woman is taken to her father's house for her first confinement is that she is ignorant of what should be done before, during and after the travail of child-birth. The comparative reserve she shows in all she does at her husband's house — reserve which sometimes leads to danger — is also a powerful motive that has encouraged this custom. This step is therefore taken in order to guard the woman against danger and her husband against any possible blame. It is felt that the young wife cannot be taken so much care of at her husband's house as under her parents roof. The Bene-Israel do not like to employ wet nurses from among people who use forbidden flesh, still less from among those castes that feed on carcasses of animals. If the mother dies, her child is brought up on the milk of the mother's or father's sister. It is nourished on the milk of a cow or goat in the absence of such a nurse. A woman has thus to bring up her children on her own milk. She has to observe rules of diet strictly, lest any deviation from them might result in some injury to the health of her child. In fact she has to follow a strict regimen, as it is believed by our people that the more strictly a puerperal woman observes rules of diet, the more healthy her child grows up. She is therefore a stranger to sweet and palatable food for almost a year or two. She cannot deck her hair with flowers at least for 4 or 5 months, nor can she put on a rich dress during the same interval. On this account previous to her accouchment she is fed daintily with sweet things, her hair is very beautifully dressed and

decorated with garlands of flowers, and she is dressed in rich clothes. As soon as the woman is in travail, she is taken to a room in which only a small amount of ventilation is permitted. A very experienced mid-wife, with whom her parents are acquainted, is then sent for. A mid-wife unacquainted with them is never called in, lest some accident shall ensue. The mid-wife is assisted by some two or three old and experienced women. As soon as the woman feels the travails of confinement, she is served with a gruel of Sheva i.e. Vermicelli and a kind of cress called Halim or Lepidium Sativum. Sometimes she is given hot milk and pepper if she takes a longer time than usual. As soon as she has been delivered of a child, a few pieces of a nutmeg are ministered to her to infuse warmth into her system, and a brass or copper plate is beaten to announce the news to all at home. Drops of cold water are then sprinkled on the body of the babe to encourage it to respire, and at the same time to ascertain that it is alive. The child is then laid in a winnowing fan and has its navel cord cut. It is also made to lick castor oil mixed with honey. Its body is rubbed over with the white of an egg that it may have no eruptions on the skin. It is then bathed in lukewarm water, and water is being poured on its head. The babe is washed and is very gently rubbed. The statement made by the Gazetteer that "its head is squeezed to give it a proper shape, its nose is pulled straight and its ears are bent", is perfectly absurd. True it is that some foolish and superstitious families do bore the nostril of the first child born alive (the right nostril if a male and the left one if a female) if the mother has been unfortunate enough to lose the first four or five of her children. This custom has probably been borrowed from the Hindus.

No sooner is the child bathed, wrapped in swaddling cloth and laid on a cot than the mother bathes and lies down by the left side of her babe. The knife with which the navel-cord has been cut off is kept under a pillow that is placed at the side or the head of the child. The reason ascribed for this practice is that the child may not be afraid of anything. As soon as the babe wakes after a short sleep, it is taken in the arms and made to lick the juice of a piece of perched aloe mixed with honey. A few drops of the milk

of a cow or a she-goat are put into its mouth, at intervals, with a piece of cotton or cloth clout. A dim lamp is purposely kept burning in the room in order that the child may not acquire a squint, or any other defect in sight.

The fee paid to the mid-wife varies from Annas eight to Rupees five. She also receives a pound of rice and a coconut as ration. The mother has pieces of dry Kernal *) and dates given to her. She is served a little later with chicken soup and with a cordial of costus arabicus, dry ginger, cloves, cinnamon, embellia ribs, and black pepper mixed with jaggery (unrefined sugar) for the next three days. In the evening she is served with a paste made of flour of wheat seasoned with jaggery and clarified butter, if she be confined in the morning, and if in the evening, she receives the paste in the next morning. Considering all the things she takes before and after her delivery, we do not understand how she can be said to observe a fast in the name of Earth or Dharitri as asserted by the Gazetteer. It would be practically impossible and merciless to make a woman observe such a rigid fast immediately after she has passed through the ordeal of child-birth.

A puerperal woman does not leave her own room for a week. Her ears and head are kept wrapped with bandages during that time. She fastens part of her Sari round her loins, and also wraps herself in a blanket and puts on sandals. She and her babe take baths with warm water twice a day : once in the morning between 7 and 8 and in the afternoon between 2 and 3, for twelve days. After the twelfth day, she and her babe are bathed once a day only, at three in the afternoon, when the body of the child is rubbed over with turmeric and the white of an egg. After the child has been bathed, native mid-wives wave two or three potfuls of the remaining quantity of water round the child and empty them at their own feet; lines of ashes are drawn by these mid-wives near the room of confinement to avert evil, but many ridicule the foolish midwives on that account.

The Bombay Gazetteer states that the Bene-Israel believed in the evil eye of jealousy and evil spirits, and attributed

*) Kernal is the white lining of a coconut.

sickness to the agency of devils and demons, and that they consequently consulted "J a n t a," i.e. an exorciser, instead of a physician. They must have contracted that habit from their pagan neighbours; it is even conceivable that they may have been taught it by their own ancestors whom we suppose to have come from Galilee, where (according to Graetz' History of the Jews II. ch. VI., pp. 148 and 149,) "through their vicinity to the heathen Syrians, the Galileans had adopted many superstitions, and, owing to their ignorance of the nature of disease, the sick were often thought to be possessed by demons, and various forms of illness were ascribed to the influence of evil spirits".

The practice of exorcism was however given up by the Bene-Israel ever since the religious revival. Dr. Wilson, in his Lands of the Bible, Vol. II p. 677 published in 1847, states that "the education of the Bene-Israel and the dissemination among them of the Scriptures are producing visible effects throughout their community. They have already nearly banished from it the idolatry and divination which were formerely practised". We do not, therefore see what motive the G a z e t t e e r or its informant had to describe obsolete customs as though they were customs still prevailing amongst the Bene-Israel. Again, we cannot but laugh at the fiction of the two kinds of the evil eye, the dry or S u k i and the wet or O l i and of the cloth locket or T a w i t described by the G a z e t t e e r. Such superstitious practices obtained about fifty or sixty years ago, among some foolish people and may still be observed clandestinely by a paltry few ignorant debased and illiterate persons. We must also add before we leave this subject that the Bene-Israel do not believe that the evil eye of jealousy harms a child if it is seen feeding or wearing good clothes. They do not likewise think that "the locket or t a w i t heals the sick and devil-ridden, kills enemies, gives children to barren women, work to idle and to every one his special wish." In fact the very word "sorcerer," the name of the religious devotee who gives these t a w i t s, excites in them feelings of repugnance, and the Jews who give them are ridiculed, since they are convinced that these t a w i t s are a mere trickery.

On the third day after confinement small pills, made of Catechu,

Soctrine aloe and jaggery, are given to the woman together with a little tea. A thick solution of dill seed, jaggery and coconut milk is given to her in order that she may supply her child with sufficient milk from her own breast. Some people give her a small quantity of dry dill seed and seed of Bishop's Weed for this purpose. She is served with paste of wheat flour and soup on this as on the previous day. The mixture of Suttora given to the woman in confinement is fried in clarified butter, and is made of dry ginger, turmeric, garlic, Bishop's weed and scrapings of coconut and is also offered to children. Female relatives, friends and acquaintances come to greet the mother on this day with presents of a tola of cloves, and a nutmeg or two in the afternoon. These things form some of the ingredients of a digestive mixture prepared at home for the child. The guests are offered sugar, betelnut ane leaves and they then retire. The source from which the author in the Gazetteer has obtained the information that on the third day the Bene-Israel women take a mixture of Suttora and throw it into each corner of the room of the confinement to satisfy and propitiate some evil spirits called Chari Bori, is probably some Hinduised or renegade Bene-Israel. They did not look upon Chari Bori as a deity, nor did they serve her with Suttora. It is likely that the practice may have found its way into some of those households where Hindu mid-wives are employed and where they command some influence. Its introduction, where found, may also be ascribed to proselytized women.

The words, "Adam and Eve" or Adams first wife "Lillith, away from hence" are sometimes engraved in Hebrew characters on a silver plate and hung round the child's neck; but these plates are seldom to be found among the Bene-Israel. It cannot therefore be said that the custom of wearing the plates prevails among the members of the community generally. This practice had its origin in modern times and can be traced to the Arabian Jews, since it is amongst those people only that it is universally prevalent.

The puerperal women is served with paste, chicken soup and rice on the fourth day. Poor people give her clarified butter and rice only. If it is Sabbath, bread and tea are given to her, or she is served with Pohai i.e. rice flattened (by pouring hot water over it,

drying it over the fire, and pressing it in a mortar) mixed with jaggery and coconut milk. On this day she commences to drink warm water or tea.

On the fifth day the woman is served with rice, soup and paste as before. The former custom to give a formal social repast to female friends is still to be met with at times. The invited guests gather between seven and eight in the evening, each provided with a coconut which is a symbol of fruitfulness. A low wooden stool is placed in the middle of the room in which the confinement actually took place: a white handkerchief is spread over it and a copy of the Scriptures is now-a-days placed on it; but formerly only a lamp with five lighted wicks was suspended from the roof in the centre of the room. Sitting at some distance both from the stool and the lamp, the woman who has been lately confined stretches forth her hand in the direction of the copy of the Scriptures and the lamp and kisses it in token of her gratitude to the Almighty for having removed the cloud of darkness which had overhung her and for having shown her the light of a lamp again. Her lap is then filled with five dry dates as a symbol of fruitfulness. Presents are given to the child by its relatives in the shape of a silk frock and jari cap, and of gold or silver bangles. The guests partake of a feast provided by the child's father or the mother's father when they sing a song or two and spend an hour or so in merry-making. The guests were formerly served on this day with parched grain, sugar, wine or liquor, betelnut and leaves; but this practice is fast dying out among them.

It is absurd to say that Panchvi is regarded as the spirit of the fifth day as stated by the Gazetteer. Shejbharni or the grain sticking ceremony begins a little later on. This is likewise a symbol of fruitfulness, but this practice has also been got rid of. We think that it is quite impossible for a woman who has just passed through the dangerous period of child-birth to wish to get two children in three years as mentioned by the Gazetteer. She cannot be anxious to speedily again court death through the travails of child-birth which she has but lately experienced (in accordance with the proverb amongst us that "boyakachi marana veti, va purushache marane sheti", " a woman has a chance of dying on

the occasion of child-birth; and a man at the time of his work on the field"). The Bene-Israel ladies, it is true, wave copper coins round the puerperal woman and her child, but they do not consider that any evil is transferred thereby to the person who takes these pieces, for if that were the case, they would not give them to their own children as they usually do. In short, women gather on the fifth day not in honour of Panchvi whom they never consider to be a deity, but simply because it is usual among the Bene-Israel to give a feast whenever there is the slightest occasion for showing joy.

On the sixth day the woman is served with egg mixture, paste, soup and rice. The custom of giving a feast to males on this day was practiced in the villages especially in former times when some persons from among the community invited their neighbours and sat the whole night singing to the accompaniments of the tamborine or Duph.

If the child born be a female, it is named on the sixth, the twelfth, the thirtieth, or some times on the eightieth day after birth, either at home or in the Synagogue. If at home, some guests are invited on this occasion; but poor people invite ten men only, this being the minimum required for communion prayers. As soon as the company assembles at about eight in the evening, a stool with a white towel spread upon it is put in the middle of the hall, where the guests are assembled, and a cup of milk and honey is placed thereon. The child being brought into the room, the Hazan or the reader of the Synagogue or the Kaji recites the following sentence :

"O my dove who art in the clefts of the rocks, in the recesses of the cliffs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice : for thy voice is sweet and thy countenance is comely", (Cant. II 14). If the female child is the first born, the following is recited in addition :

"But one alone is my dove, my guiltless one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the chosen of her that bore her : maidens see her, and call her happy; Yea Queens and concubines and praise her" (Ibid chapter VI 9). This being done the child is

made by five men to lick honey and milk, when the following text is recited :

"Of sweet honey drop thy lips. O bride! honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the scent of thy garments is like the scent of Lebanon" (Ibid, IV 11). The child is then blessed according to the usual Jewish ritual.

After this has been done, a repast is given to the party when some people sing Hebrew and Marathi songs from the Psalms of David, which occupy an hour or two, and the party then breaks up.

On the seventh day the mother comes out of her room and receives her female relatives. As soon as they come in, the mother takes the child in her arms, and moves in and out of the door of her confinement room several times. Water mixed with turmeric powder is sprinkled over her. A cot having been placed in another room ,a mattress or a bed is spread on it and covered with a white clean sheet. This was undoubtedly a local usage borrowed from Gentile neighbours. The mother then laid her child in the middle of the cot on the bed, and handfuls of boiled gram and pieces of coconut were placed round the child on the cot. When this had been done, each little boy and girl who had been invited to this party went in turn near the child ,and said "Come away, child! let us go to play and eat a dish of rice cakes on the sixth day". When the boy or girl had taken some of the boiled gram from beside the child he or she ran away, and while doing so, was struck with a twisted handkerchief by one of the other boys or girls. Though now almost obsolete, yet whereever it is observed the old order is followed.

A male child is circumcised on the eighth day after his birth and then he receives his name. The child is circumcised by his father if he is a good operator, otherwise it is circumcised by the Hazan or the Reader of the Synagogue or by any operator from the Community. The operator is called Mohel a מוהל i.e. a circumciser. The fee paid to the Synagogue on the occasion varies from Rupees two to five. The Mohel receives from Rupee one to Rupees two from the father of the child. In other countries the Mohel receives no fee. A Mohel always longs to circumcise as many children as is the numerical value of this name מ —40, ו — 6, ה — 5, ל — 30 in all 81. The mohel Judah David Ashkenazi, a Cochin Jew used to

circumcise children in Bombay, both among the Bene-Israel and other Jews without any fee. The circumcision is performed either at home or in the Synagogue. Relatives, friends and acquantances only are invited on the occasion of circumcision. The eveneing before the day of circumcision, a few men go to the place where the child is to be circumcised and place a chair near the wall at the west side. If the circumcision is to be performed in a Synagogue, a chair is placed to the left side of the Ark, in memory of Elijah the Prophet, who is called מלאך הברית "the Angel or Messanger of the Covenant", and is said to come along with the child, and to be present at every circumcision. A copy of the Scriptures is placed upon the chair, which is covered with a silk or cotton curtain, left hanging from the wall.

A table covered with white cloth is placed at some distance from the chair ,and a citron and a twig of subja or myrtle are placed thereon. Between the table and the chair dedicated to the memory of the Prophet Elijah, two other chairs are placed in front of each other ,one for the circumciser and the other for the Sandek (godfather).

On the morning of the circumcision the child is taken in a palanquin or in a carriage to the Synagogue accompanied by friends and relatives. The mother remains at home, as she may not enter the synagogue before the purification which takes place on the fortieth day. If the circumcision is delayed owing to the child's illness, she takes her child to the synagogue on the fortieth day after the birth. On the entrance of the party into the compound of the Synagogue juice of dry grapes or raisins and a plate containing a cup of oil, and a piece of lint or some cotton are taken inside and placed on the table where two candles are lit. The child is generally carried from or to the palanquin or the carriage into or from the synagogue by the maternal-uncle. The actual ceremony is being performed according to the usual Jewish ritual.

Presents are given to the child by its relatives after the circumcision is over. They are in cash, or consist of ornaments of gold or silver. Batasas (sugar cakes) are then distributed, and the party breaks up. Some of the relatives accompany the child home, where they cut the citron, break a coconut or two and invoke Elijah the

Prophet. Pieces of citron and Kernal are then distributed to the party. A cock is killed on this occasion, cooked and given to the circumcisor and members of the family; but the parents of the circumcised child do not partake of it. Fees are demanded by the Kaji and the synagogue officers on the occasion of birth, marriage and death, but no registers are kept.

The ceremonial is the same when the circumcision is performed at home.

On the morning of the twelfth day, the child is bathed and laid in a cradle with the repetition of the word Be s he m A d o n a i that is, "in the name of God"; one or two songs are then sung to lull the child to sleep ,and at other times a pretty lullaby is always repeated while it is being rocked to sleep. *) But on the first occasion when the child is being put into the cradle, a coconut or two are broken and their water is sprinkled on all sides, and the coconut Kernals and sugar are handed round to the children of the house.

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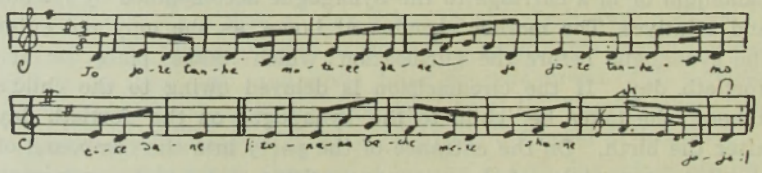
*) The author probably refers to the following popular Lullaby which I saw reproduced in a collection of Hebrew Smiroth. The tune was given to me by Mrs. Simon, a Bene-Israel lady of Bombay :



1. Jo jo, my child,
   My seed of pearl,
   Keep your eyes
   From crying, my treasure, jo jo.

2. I waved your cradle
   of sea-weed, my child;
   Lie quietly,
   Sleep, my sweet, jo jo.

3. I'll lay you in it,
   You'll sleep pleasantly;

I'll pray to the Above,
The Lord of the world, jo jo.

4. My milk has quietened you,
Has sweetened your lips,
And within the hand of God
I shall deliver your soul, jo jo.

5. I washed your flesh,
I pitied you dear;
In the Name of the Lord
I put you to sleep, jo jo.

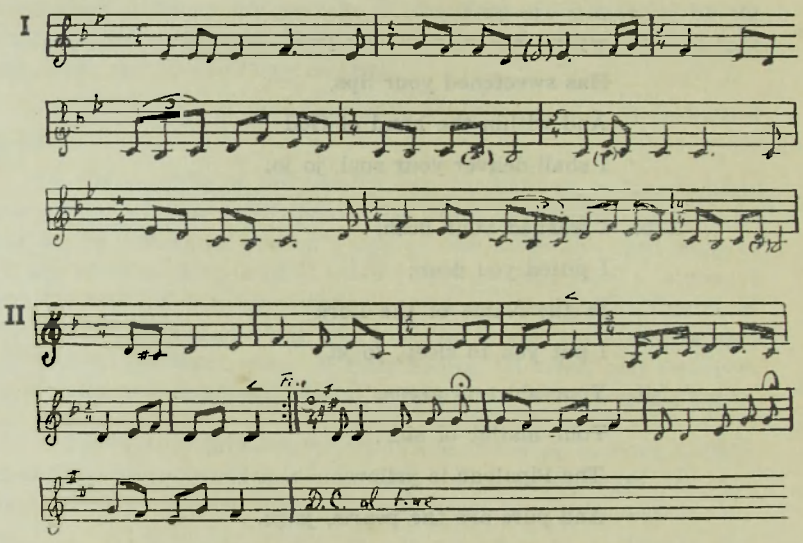
6. Your shirt is green,
Your matlet of silk;
The Pipalpan is yellow
And pure are the pearls, jo jo.

7. Your cradle is of Sandlewood,
Your cushion of silk;
Grandmother will come
And will sing you to sleep, jo jo.

8. I'll tread pearls for you
To decorate your neck;
Your mother will dress
Her head with flowers.

N.B. In the 2nd verse the Bene-Israel see an allusion to Moses. The last two lines of the last verse imply the wish that the father of the child may remain alife, since it is forbidden by Indian custom for a widow to wear flowers. (I. O.).

We insert here two more tunes of Bene-Israel songs, dealing with the life of Joseph. (I.O.).



In the morning of the fortieth day after a boy's birth or the eightieth *) day after a girl's, a woman lately confined is being purified. A barber is sent for in the afternoon of this day, and the head of the child is shaved, as the Bene-Israel women regard it improper to allow the hair, which the child had while in the womb, to grow on after its birth. Some elderly person takes it on his or her lap and a new hand-kerchief is spread below its head, so that its hair may fall upon the kerchief while it is being shaved off. The hand-kerchief with the hair in it is presented after the shaving is over to the barber who receives a seer of rice and a coconut as ration, and four or eight Annas in addition.

After this is done a pot or a pan is filled with cold water and put in the confinement room where the mother is to be bathed. A twig of subja is dipped into it and turned round and round, and while it is so being turned, some one is asked to repeat the following

*) Leviticus XII 1—5.

Hebrew text : — "Thine O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the Majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is t h i n e ; thine is the Kingdom, O Lord ,and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou rulest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name." (I Chron. XXIX 11—13.). "And the people shall bless thy honoured name which is exalted above all blessings and praise" (Nehem. IX. 5).

The following is repeated o v e r the water with which the mother of a female child is purified on the eightieth day : "And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken". "May it be acceptable in thy presence, O Lord my God; and the God of my fathers this ablution be with the rest of the daughters of Israel through the merits of my fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon the first righteous and holy men. May she not for ever meet with any evil spirit nor encountere any evil, nor harbour any thoughts of sin".

The mother of the child then first bathes herself and afterwards her child with warm water and then herself with cold water, after which she is regarded as being cleansed. A plate is then held over the head of the child, and ten or twenty balls of boiled rice-flour are rolled over its head. They are caught while falling on the ground by the children of the house and are eaten by them on the spot. A dish is filled in the evening with M a l i d a (pieces of rice-bread besmeared with jaggery) pieces of coconut-Kernal, Subja or myrtle and also the legs, liver and gizzard (which latter is opened and dressed before it is taken) and the wings of a cock ,and is placed on a white sheet. There is no doubt that the contents of the dish symbolised the offerings for purification mentioned in the twelfth chapter of Leviticus. After repeating V e - y i t e n l e c h a , the verses of blessing, and invoking Elijah the Prophet, the contents of the dish are served to all the members of the family. None except the inmates of a household take part in this ceremony. The Hazan or reader is sometimes invited as the only stranger who may be present then. Though the Bene-Israel

were ignorant in times past of all other formulae which they ought to repeat on this occasion, they rehearsed K e r i y a t S h e m a, and observed the method of purification described above. This is the common practice observed by all the Bene-Israel.

If the accouchment of a woman takes place at her father's house, her husband after purification sends a message to the effect that she and her child may be sent home. After they receive this message, her parents deck her hair gracefully, put glass bangles on her wrist, buy a Saree and bodice for her, present wristlets made of gold or silver to her child, if it is a male, and gold or silver bangles, if it is a female; the lobes of the ear of a female child are bored and ornamented with earrings. Besides these, some trinkets such as a Zabla (a sort of loose silk or cotton frock), a skull cap and a cradle are sent with the mother. (Formerly on arrival of the mother with the child at the husbands house, a woman came from the house with a little quantity of cooked rice or A m b a t B h a t, waved it round the heads of the mother and the child, and threw it away to satisfy the evil spirits, or to over-come the evil eye. This custom is now obsolete). A feast is given at her husband's house to her parents to which relatives and friends are also invited. Presents are given to the parents of the woman if all the expenses of child-birth are borne by them; if it is otherwise even a feast is not given.

If a woman is confined at her husband's house, her parents take her on the twelfth day to their house for a change of residence, and keep her there until her purification, after which they send her home with the presents of a Saree and bodice for herself and a skull-cap and Zabla (frock) for her child.

Redemption of the First-born son.

If the child be a first-born son he is redeemed from the Cohen, a Levite priest, in accordance with Exodus, XIII 1.2. After forty days, when his mother is purified, relatives, friends and acquaintances are invited by the father to this ceremony. When the appointed time arrives and all are present, the father of the child acquaints the Cohen with the fact that his wife who is an Israelite has brought him forth a male child, and that it is her first-born, and says : "I give him to thee". The Cohen then asks

him, which of the two he would rather have, whether his first-born son or the money which he is obliged to give. To this, the father replies "this is my first-born; here, take unto thee the five shekels which are thy due for his redemption". He then hands over to the Cohen a number of coins, generally to the amount of about six Rupees, and whilst doing so, he repeats the following blessing :— "Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with thy commandments, and commanded us to perform the redemption of the son. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who hast preserved us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season."

After the above blessing is over the priest asks the mother if she has before been delivered of any other child, or has ever miscarried. If she answers in the negative, the Cohen says, "This son being a first born, the blessed God hath commanded us to redeem him", as it is said, "and those that are to be redeemed, from a month old, shalt thou redeem them, according to thine estimation, for the money of five Shekels, after the Shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty Gerahs." while thou didst exist in thy mother's womb, thou wast in the power of thy father who is in heaven, and in that of thy father and mother; but at present, thou art in my power; for I am a Cohen (priest), and thy father and mother are desirous to redeem thee, for thou art a sanctified first-born; as it is written. "The Lord spoke unto Moses saying, sanctify unto me the first-born, whatsoever opened the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast it is mine." He then turns to the father and says, "I have received from thee these five Shekels, for the redemption of this thy son; and behold, he is therewith redeemed according to the law of Moses and Israel." He also says, "May it be acceptable in the presence of our God who is in Heaven, that as thou hast merited to redeem this son, so thou mayest have the merit to perform all the precepts of the law." After the ceremony is over, the Cohen usually returns the five Shekels presented to him by the father. The father of the child then gives a feast to the party present, and the guests withdraw after smoking Hooka, and taking betelnut and leaves. This ceremony has but recently been introduced among

the Bene-Israel. When there is no Cohen, the ceremony is omitted

In former times when a female child was one or two years old, her ears were bored in four places for putting in four kinds of pendants, Fuls, Mugries, Khoodbalya, and Pedas, for a description of which we refer our readers to the list of ornaments given by us in our chapter on marraige. The left nostril is also bored to suspend the nose-ring therefrom. The practice of boring the ears is general all over the orient. It has been prevalent amongst the Israelites from the time of Abraham, whose daughter-in-law, Rebecca (the wife of Isaac) had a nose-ring and golden bracelets. (Genesis XXII 22. 47., XXXV 4., Isaiah III., 21., Ezekiel XVI, 12., Judges VIII, 24. 25., Job XLII. II., Prov. XXV. 12., Hos. II. 13.). Some of our people have, however, given up of late the practice of boring the nose and the ears in four places. The lower parts of the ear are now bored to put in ear-rings or some other pendants.

The Bene-Israel think vaccination preferable to small-pox. In case a child is attacked by small-pox, measles or chicken-pox, they nurse it with the greatest solicitude and care, and do not allow a woman in a state of non-purification to cross the threshold of their house. Should there be such a one already in the house, she is sent away elsewhere. They use vegetables only in the house — all sorts of meat are avoided; they feed the babies with its mothers milk, and on a cow's or buffalo's milk; an adult is fed on cows or buffalo's milk, congee, rice-porridge etc. It is said that some of the Bene-Israel worshipped in former times, when they were in benigthed state, the small-pox Goddess S h i t l a D e v i in imitation of Hindus; but several years have already elapsed since the abolition of this superstition from their midst.

When a child between a year and a half and two years begins to walk, children in the house ask its parents for sweet-meats. The mother takes a coconut, breaks it in front of the child's feet, and divides the Kernal and dates or sugar among the children instead of the sweet-meat asked for.

In times past when a married girl became 12 years old, two or three girls would go round and invite female relatives, generally on her birth-day for her skirt-ceremony, in imitation of local

custom. The relatives came in at about eight or ten in the morning, when the girl and her husband were bathed. The boy then put on fine clothes ,the hair of the girl was combed and decked with flowers. As soon as this was over, five married women went to her and made the skirt of her Saree pass over her head from the right to the left. The boy and the girl were made to sit on low wooden stools side by side. Sugar was then put into their mouths, and the girl's lap was filled with almonds, dry dates, betelnuts etc., and grains of rice were thrown over her body as a symbol of fruitfulness. The boy then left the company and the female relatives sang some songs and were offered a repast; but this practice or ceremony has been done away with long since.

When early marriages were common among the Bene-Israël in days gone by, a ceremony called N a h a n a c h a s o h l a was performed by some in imitation of local custom, when a married girl arrived at the age of puberty, but as early marriages are now put a stop to, and as the girls that are married are quite adults, and arrive at the age of puberty while they are at their parent's houses, we might say without fear of contradiction, that this practice has entirely been done away with. In regard to skirt, puberty, pregnancy and many other local ceremonies mentioned by the G a z e t t e e r we must say that they have been discontinued by our people ever since the rays of religious enlightenment dawned upon them, and opened their eyes to the follies in which in their ignorance they had been indulging.

CHAPTER VI

MARRIAGE

Before we begin to treat of marriage we shall enumerate some of the customs introduced amongst our people in imitation of local usages. Fixing an auspicious day for marriage; calling out five unwidowed or unmarried women, as is done on every auspicious occasion; putting on bangles on the wrist of the bride a day previous to her marriage; waving copper or silver coin round the bride and bride-groom (not to avert evil, like the Hindus, for the latter throw the same afterwards to people of the lower casts in order that evil may be averted from the pair and be transferred to these low people, whilst among the Bene-Israel, the pieces are presented to the very sisters of the bride and bride-groom); throwing rice on their bodies as a sign of fertility; rubbing their hands and feet with Mendi (Henna); fastening together the hems of their handkerchiefs as a symbol of union; the tying of a necklace (Lacha) of glass and golden beads round the neck of the bride at the conclusion of the marriage ceremony; making the newly married pair tear out rolls of leaves, held between the teeth, from the mouths of each other; making them play the games of odd and even; the bridegroom's going away from the bride in pretended ill humour; the hiding by the bride-groom of a betel-nut or some ornament which is to be searched for and found by the bride; the breaking of their bangles and of the Lacha, worn by a woman, after the death of her husband; and the discontinuing of the use of the nose ring by a widow. Though the introduction of these local customs is to be ascribed to our ancestors, it must be borne in mind that time and circumstances must have compelled them to practice them. We are, however, glad to find that most of the local customs named have gradually been given up by our people during the last fifty or sixty years; and the

rest are also on the eve of extinction.

Early marriages were common amongst the Bene-Israel in former times, and children of eight or ten years old were married, a custom familiar to us from biblical times. (Proverbs II, 17., V, 18., Isaiah LXII, 5). Hence it is that the authors of the Talmud have laid down that unless a boy becomes thirteen years and a day old and a girl twelve years and a day old, they should not be married. Nevertheless no marriages were common before they were eighteen. Such being the respective ages of a marriageable couple, everyting in connection with their espousals was naturally managed by their parents or guardians.

Though marriages amongst us are now generally solemnized when both the boy and the girl are adults, the parents or guardians still take the lead in making a choice, but while doing so they usually, at least among the better classes, act with the consent of the boy and the girl. The bitter experience of the evils that arise from the institution of early marriages, combined with the growing knowledge of their scriptures, have taught the Bene-Israel to almost give up this pernicious institution. During the last 50 or 60 years we find few instances of this kind occuring and it is a gratifying circumstance to note that the institution of early marriage is fast disappearing from amongst us. No marriage as a rule now-a-days takes place unless the bride groom is a youngman of twenty or twenty-one years old, and the bride be 14 or 15. The allegation made by the informant of the Bombay Gazetteer that amongst the Bene-Israel "a girl over whom 15 summers have scarcely passed is sometimes married to a man who has with difficulty survived the ravages of sixty winters, and an infant girl of eight years to a stout young man of twenty," is a statement made without any basis of truth for the following reasons. —

Marriages amongst adults are common among the Bene-Israel, and hence grown up girls can very easily be found. Sometimes girls of twenty or twenty-one years old can also be found. Moreover as widow marriages have been habitually practised from the earliest times, many widows can also be found. The anomalies referred to above, are not therefore, on the face of the thing, likely

to take place amongst the Bene-Israel. The Hindu custom of sometimes giving a young girl in marriage to an old man of fifty or sixty does not exist at all amongst the Bene-Israel, for they value the well-being of their children, and they are ever prompt to give up a particular custom or habit if it be found to be detrimental in its effects on the children. Notwithstanding all this, if one foolish person amongst the whole community acts otherwise, his action must not be taken as a test of the custom of the whole community.

As soon as the intention of getting their son married is formed by parents, their first care is to see whether the family with which they would like to connect themselves is of pure Hebrew blood. They then ascertain if the members of that family suffer from any hereditary disease. When they have ascertained after a searching inquiry that the family is of pure blood and has no natural defects, they decide upon the proposal for union tentatively, and ask the boy whether he likes the proposal; but should he not like it, they proceed to find out another suitable bride for him. When parents have at last obtained their son's consent, they send match-makers to the parents of the girl to know whether they would accept their proposal. Thus, as a general rule, the proposal originates with the family of the bride-groom. These match-makers are two in number and are chosen from amongst the relatives of the family or other persons of the community with whom they may be acquainted. They may be either male or female. If one of the match-makers be a man and the other a woman the former match-maker sits outside on the verandah with the father of the girl and the latter match-maker sits with the mother. The match-makers then make an offer for the girl's hand. If both of them be men they go to the father of the girl and make him an offer. He sends them back saying he will let them know about it in a week or two, or in a month or so. The parents of the girl institute inquiries similar to those done by the parents of the boy, and in addition to this they inquire whether the boy be an intelligent and promising young man, and whether he bears a good character, and can earn his livelihood. According to the information thus gained they either refuse or accept the offer. If they have to refuse the

offer, they assign no reason for their refusal. If they intend to consent, the parents of the girl inquire what presents*) (ornaments and clothes) the boy or his father would give to the girl. At the same time the match-makers inquire what amount of dowry **) and articles of wearing apparel or ornaments the girl would receive from her parents; but in the case of respectable and good families no importance is attached to these enquiries. They plainly say that each of the parties should spend as much as their means would permit and advise each other not to incur any debt on that account. If the parents of the boy and the girl have agreed, the matrimonial union is brought about and the parents of the boy go to the girl's house and present a small quantity of sugar. After a day or two the ceremony of Espousal is performed, when relativets of the boy and the girl are invited. Five married or unmarried women, followed by other women, go to the girl's home in the morning with a plate full of sugar. Two low wooden stools covered with a white sheet are placed on the ground. One of them is occupied by the girl, who always sits facing the East, and the other by her mother who sits behind her. They then drop sugar into the mouth of the girl and of her mother with the words "Be-Shem-Adonai" ("In the name of the Lord,") they distribute sugar also among all the female guests. The parents of the girl then serve the women-guests with a repast of rice and sweetened coconut milk; after betelnut and leaves are distributed, the party break up. At about eight O'clock in the evening the relatives and the Mankarees (elders of the community) accompany the father of the boy to the house of the girl, when the match-maker tells the persons present that the daughter of so-and-so is espoused to the son of so-and-so, and informs them that both parties have agreed to the conditions about ornaments, dowry etc. One of the Mankarees or other elderly persons asks the parents of the boy and of the girl if they have anything more to say. If they say that nothing more remains to be settled, the girl is made to sit on one of the two stools (which are covered with white sheets, and placed as before) but the other is either occupied by her father

*) Gen. XXIV. 53.

**) Judges I. 14—15.

or brother, who sits behind her. The Kaji or Hazan (Reader) then puts a little quantity of sugar into the mouth of the girl, and into the mouths of the fathers of the boy and the girl who sit any where in the company, with the words "Beshem Adonai". A small quantity of sugar is then distributed as before, among the male guests and slight repast consisting of parched corn is given by the parents of the boy, (cf. Mishna, Ke tuboth, II,1) then a glass of wine or liquor is handed over to each. Lastly betelnut and leaves, which they called Pansupare'e, is distributed, and the party retires.

If the marriage is not to take place till six months or a year later, the ceremony of bethrothal or engagement takes place from a week to a month after the espousal. When the appointed day arrives, five married or unmarried women go in the morning to the girl's house with a plate full of sugar and the same ceremony is gone through as is done at the time of espousal. In the evening of the same day at about eight, relatives, friends, Mankarees and headman assemble, having a day or two previously been requested to attend. As soon as the guests come in, the boy, richly dressed, is taken in procession on horse-back or in a Nalki (a sort of open palanquin) to the girl's residence, attended by torches and headed by music. While the boy is being led to be seated on a caparisoned horse or in an open palanquin, two boys walk in front with lighted candles in their hands and the Hazan (Reader) repeats Igdal Elohim*). The party then forms into a procession and goes to the girl's home. Only the well-to-do perform this ceremony with as much pomp as is here described; but it is seldom performed even by them now-a-days. Among the middle and poor class Bene-Israel, the boy goes to the girl's home on foot, attended by men with lighted lanterns in their hands. At the house of the girl, two wooden stools are placed ready, covered with white sheets, the girl is seated on one of them and the other is occupied by her mother. The boy is then led in and seated in front of the girl, when a plate containing sugar and a gold ring is brought in and placed between them. The Kaji or the Hazan

*) This hymn contains the 13 Fundamental articles of the Jewish Faith.

(Reader) takes up the ring, and hands it to the boy, who, when putting it on the forefinger of the girl, says in Hebrew three times: "Behold thou art betrothed unto me by this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel." This institution of presenting a ring obtains among the Bene-Israetl from very ancient times. The Kaji or the Hazan (Reader) then drops sugar into the mouth of the girl, the boy, and the fathers of both, repeating the words "Be-shem Adonai". The father of the girl then presents a ring to the boy, whose father serves the company with a repast of parched corn; while that of the girl serves the party with rice and coconut milk sweetened with sugar or jaggery. In order to accustom them to each other's society the boy and the girl dine together, as was done in ancient times *); while the parents of both dine with the people assembled. The intention of the parties in dining with each ather and in bringing in milk and rice together appears to be that the word of each may be plighted and never be broken, for, eating from the same dish meant unity between the parties, for they were fed with the same food from the same dish. Like the Natives who would never play false with one with whom they have once taken rice and milk together, the Bene-Israel go through the ceremony to cement an indissoluble bond between the girl and the boy, the only difference being the substitution of coconut instead of cow's milk when this rite is performed. After the dinner is over, the persons that accompany the boy to the girl's home take him back to his house, and the girl escorts him as far as the threshold of the door. The boy cannot go to the girl's house unless this ceremony is performed. This has been the custom among the Bene-Israel from very ancient times.

Though the cermony may have been performed, the intended union sometimes falls through, whenever any physical defects or sickness either in the girl, the boy or their parents are found out.

As the day fixed for the marriage draws nearer, the parents of both the bride and the bride-groom engage themselves in making purchases of rice, pulse, wheat, condiments, sugar, jaggery, oil clothes etc. They are also busily occupied in making ornaments. Earnest-money is paid to musicians, band masters, torch-bearers,

*) Mishna Ketuboth XXIV.

Bagwallas (bearers of wooden frames with artificial flowers). Marriages are generally solemnized on Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday evenings. In ancient times, that is, when they lived in Palestine ,the Hebrews celebrated marriages on Wednesdays and re-marriages on Thursdays, as the Courts of Justice were open on Mondays and Thursdays to enable the bride-groom to complain of the non-virginity early the next morning before the Beth-Din (Court of Justice). Notwithstanding this ancient rule, the modern Jews solemnize bachelor or spinster marriages on Wednesday and Friday evening, and re-marriages on Thursday. The ancestors of the Bene-Israel solemnized marriages on Sundays and Mondays only. Re-marriages are performed, as previously stated, on Wednesdays i.e. the night which sets in after the sun-set of Wednesday, and which is Thursday according to the Jewish method of reckoning time. The months of Kartik (Heshwan, September-October), Margshirs (Kislev, October-November), Magh (Shebat, January-February), Falgoon (Adar, February-March), after Purim, Vaishak (Iyar, May-June), on Laglaomer *) or 33 days after Passover and the month of Jeshta (Sivan, June), are the marriage season. Marriages are seldom solemnized in the month of Bhadrapad (Elul, September). Unlike the Hindus, the Bene-Israel do not care to ascertain any suspicious moment for marriage, and do not ever consult Horoscopes, as the practice of making Horoscopes does not obtain among them. The Bene-Israel erected marriage booths in former times, but now this custom has almost gone out of use. They are however seen in some parts of the Konkan, and in villages, where plenty of space can be had for their erection. This practice does not exist in Bombay, partly owing to the great scarcity of empty space ,and partly owing to the cost incurred. The booths which the Bene-Israel erected at the time of marriage are symbolized by the velvet canopies now held over the bride and bride-groom at the time of actual marriage amongst the Jews. When there were no Synagogues among the Bene-Israel, marriages were solemnized in these booths. These booths are not now allowed to be erected on a public road, if they obstruct traffic; and for a booth

*) The non-solemnization of marriages between Passover and Pentecost is a recent practice.

erected in a by-lane or a street Rs. 50 daily must be paid to the Municipality if it in any way interferes with the traffic. Besides Rs. 5 are to be paid daily to the Municipality for using music in public streets. Being unable to defray such heavy expenses now-a-days, the Bene-Israel of Bombay employ the services of musicians for one day only.

A week before marriage, five married women are asked to come and assist in the preparation for the marriage feast. Accordingly they come, and wash rice for the feast to be given either to the men of the community, or at least to the male and female relatives. Sugar ,betelnut and leaves are then furnished to them. The object of presenting sugar at every stage of the marriage is that the ceremony may go on smoothly and pleasantly, and a large quantity of jaggery and sugar is therefore consumed during every marriage. In the Konkan and many other villages these women go to a well situated in the rear of the house, or in a garden of some other house to wash the rice . In Bombay and Poona for the last ten or twenty years they have been accustomed to wash the rice with the water of the pipes in their houses. While they are engaged in this occupation they amuse themselves by throwing water at each other. This is done merely out of fun. It is, no doubt, a pleasant way of amusing readers to give them details of playful acts that are practised among women and children, whether during marriage or at other times. The Gazetteer states that the women in the evening come to grind rice, and before doing so "smear the handmill with turmeric". They do not smear it, but only apply a little quantitiy of turmeric to it, and tie leaves of the mango-tree round its neck in imitation of local usage. It is merely a sign of marriage. As black borders on paper and envelopes are expressive of mourning among Europeans, so marks of turmeric express the sign of marriage among the Bene-Israel, who accordingly use such marks for letters of invitation also. The women who assist in grinding the rice are invited to dinner by the parents of the bride and bride-groom, when a glass of liquor is offered to them; but we think that the Gazetteer has given the public an ample amount of information indeed by publishing such facts. While grinding corn the women sing songs in Marathi. Sometimes

the bride and bride-groom are eulogised in these songs.*).

About four of five days before the solemnization of marriage, the fathers of the bride and bridegroom go to the headman of the community and request him to call a meeting of the community to fix a day for a marriage. Accordingly a meeting is called the same evening, or the next. Men resort to the verandah of the synagogue or into any other place in its vicinity, if there be one, as there are no vestry rooms or chambers attached to Bene-Israel synagogues in India. The headman then explains the reason of their gathering, and demands the payment of the fees from the parents of the bride and the bride-groom if no objection be raised.

Poor Bene-Israel are only charged half the marriage fee.

There is a notion prevalent among the Bene-Israel that man must necessarily undergo three and a half ablutions during his existence in this world. The daily ablution being performed without any ceremony is reckoned to be the half; while the ablutions of birth, marriage and death are considered to be of great importance, and therefore performed with great solemnity and ceremony. Following this time-honoured custom, the Bene-Israel invite their relatives and friends, when bride and bride-groom make an ablution at their respective houses a day previous to the marriage; and as marriages are generally solemnized among the Bene-Israel on Sunday evening, the ablution takes place on the Saturay evening, between 9 and 10. On this occasion, as the presence of the female guests is necessary, young girls of the houses of the bride and bride-groom go between three and four p.m. to invite them. Music is played when the bathing begins. The female guests that are invited come at about 9 or 10 p.m., because at that time the ceremony of bathing begins. As soon as these female guests assemble, a female hawker of glass bangles is called in, for the purpose of putting bangles on the wrist of the bride and the five bride's-maids. During the time when early marriages took place, the bride and the bride-groom were given a bath at their respective houses after their bodies had been rubbed with turmeric and with a composition of fragrant ingredients and coconut milk. The bath was administered by the

*) It would be interesting to learn whether there are such specifically Bene-Israel wedding songs (I. O.).

maidens, who were generally their relatives. Now-a-days the maidens just formally apply the turmeric etc. to the head and forearms of both the bride and bride-groom who then help themselves in taking the bath. We cannot say with certainty on what authority the Bene-Israel women consider the presence of f i v e unwidowed women or unmarried girls as indispensable on this as well as on many other important ceremonies of similar nature. It may be on the authority of Jeremiah chapter XXXIII. 2. in which the word "voice" occurs five times : "The v o i c e of joy, the v o i c e of glandness, the v o i c e of the bride-groom and the v o i c e of the bride, the v o i c e of them that shall say thank the Eternal of hosts;" or it may be a Hindu usage. Another reason why on such auspicious occasions five unwidowed women or unmarried girls are needed is that widows, who are regarded by some superstitious persons as signs of misfortune, may have no share in the ceremony. They are, however, not excluded from the invitation, but they do not take any part in the ceremony. These maidens engage in fun with one another by applying turmeric. The Bene-Israel ladies think that the bride-groom has the K h u d a i - n o o r , or the brightness of God, on him; and hence he is not allowed to leave the house, and two companions are always near him. After the bride and bride-groom have taken their baths at their respective houses, they are served with supper, which consists of nothing more than milk and rice mixed with sugar or jaggery. After this they are seated on a cot, covered with a white sheet, at their respective houses, when the bride-groom wears a white turban and the bride is clad with a P h a d k i or showl over her head and s h e r a s are tied round their heads. These s h e r a s as worn among the Bene-Israel, are nothing more than the symbols of those garlands and wreaths of flowers which were put on the bride-groom and the bride respectively in biblical times in Palestine, as will be explained hereafter. On this night the mothers of the bride and bride-groom are presented with S a r i e s by the relatives.

Soon after the bride and bride-groom have adorned themselves, M e n d i or Henna is applied in imitation of the Mahomedan practice, to their hands and feet at their respective places,

except that a small quantity of it is taken from the bride-groom's house to that of the bride, in order to apply it to her fore-finger. The five maidens who thus take the Henna are served with rice and milk along with all the guests that have come for the ceremony to the house of the bride. A similar treat is also given to the ladies that have come to the bride-groom's house, and after the distribution of P a n s u p a r i the guests retire.

On the day of marriage, at about 10 or 12 a. m., a dinner is given at the bride and bride-groom's houses; it is called "N i t h" in their language. Before the dinner a tinned copper dish (and not a brass one, for the Bene-Israel never use brass dishes) is placed on a white sheet in the centre of the guests that have been invited to the feast. The dish contains only rice-cakes made for the wedding, as well as pieces of liver, fried eggs, s u b j a (but neither coconut Kernal nor h e m p as stated by the G a z e t t e e r — for the Bene-Israel detest the latter article) and a glass of wine is placed near it, as a drink-offering, together with a censer, on which frank-incense was burnt in former times, and Elijah the Prophet is invoked to be present on the occasion. After this, the Kaji or the Hazan (Reader) takes some pieces of wedding cake, liver, etc. for himself ,and the dish is removed into the house, and the dinner is served to the party. We must here remark that many of the censers, which are no longer used now, but on which the Bene-Israel used to burn frank-incense fifty or sixty years ago, can still be seen at the houses of some of the families; but since the time they received information from the Jews that it was improper to do so, they have given up this practice of burning incense. We ourselves recollect that they used to burn incense on these occasions, and elderly people still living also testify to the same effect. Even in feasts given at the time of fulfilling a vow or a freewill offering they burnt frank-incense, as directed in Leviticus II. 1. They continued, and their descendants still continue to practise almost all the institutions that were in vogue amongst the Hebrews of the time of the Second Temple. The only thing they have ceased to follow is that they offer no sacrifices. But they would not object to offer bloodless sacrifices or meat-offerings.

After the dinner described above was over, in former times,

the boy was seated on a cot covered with a white cloth, and his head was shaved by a barber. His brother or his father sat behind him on the cot. While the shaving went on, the boy's relatives each waved a coin over his head, and afterwards handed it over to the barber. After the shaving of the boy had been finished, the heads of his companions were also shaved. The barber received as a ration a seer of rice, a coconut and a Rupee or a half in addition. The bridegroom and his companions were then bathed in hot water, and the boy was dressed in new clothes. This custom of shaving has been completely abandoned in recent times.

About four or five in the evening men and women guests arrive at the boy's house. As they come the men are seated in the marriage hall, where carpets are spread; and the women are provided with seats inside the house. In the house two plates are filled — one with a silk Saree and bodice, and now-a-days with a polka; ornaments of gold, five pieces of dry dates, almonds, betelnut and coloured skeins of thread, a scent bottle and a fragrant powder called "Abeer" and a seer*) and a quarter of sugar; another plate contains a seer and quarter of jaggery, silver ornaments, such as tinkling ornaments, foot-chains, and a silk or cotton Saree, a bodice, and recently a polka and other articles as in the first plate. They are covered with new silk handkerchiefs that are brought into the marriage hall and set in the midst of the guests. Two men take them in their hands, and go with music to the girl's house along with others. There also the men sit in the marriage hall, and women inside the house or at one side of the hall. Two low wooden stools, covered with white sheets, are placed between the male and female guests and the bride is seated on one of the stools, her father sitting behind her. Five men then help in removing the handkerchiefs from the plates, and the Kaji or the Hazan (Reader) then puts some sugar into the mouth of the bride and also gives a small quantity of it to her father. The girl's relations are called in to see the contents of the plates. They examine the ornaments, the Sarees, and bodices and if they are not satisfied with the value, objections are raised; but these objections in such cases are soon removed by the father of the bride-groom supplying the deficiency. The presents

*) A seer contains 24 Tolas or about 10 ounces.

of arnaments and costly clothes to the bride are in accordance with ancient usage (Isaiah III 16-23; XLIX. 18; LXI. 10).

The following is the list of articles presented to a bride by her parents and by the bride-groom (the value in Rupees is given in brackets):

PRESENTS FROM THE PARENTS :

Head Ornaments.

Chandrakore, a crescent shaped gold ornament; (15 — 30); **Ketak**, a gold ornament for the hair; (15 — 30); **Kedva**, a gold ornament for the hair of the shape of leaflets (15 — 30); **Ful**, as before for the hair (15 — 30); **Kulki**, a golden hair-ornament of the shape of a rice lump, (15 — 30); Kalees, a gold ornament of the shape of flower buds (100 — 150); **Gondas**, for the hair as before, (100 — 150).

Eear-ornaments :

Moogrees, and **Ful**, as before (12 — 30).

Nuth, or nose ring, (50 — 100).

Neck-ornaments :

Two gold **Patlies**, (10 — 15); **Pan** of gold, (15 — 20-; 4 Golden Mummies or beads, (15 — 20).

Ornaments for the Arms :

Patlies of silver, (8 — 10); **Patlies** of gold, (200 — 250); **Kangnees** of gold, (60 — 100).

Ornaments for the waist :

Kambarputta of silver (now obsolete), (20 — 30); **Kambarputta** of gold (now obsolete), (100 — 200); **Zanjras** of silver for the feet (now obsolete), (25 — 30); One wooden box (now obsolete), (5 — 10); One **Handa**, a copper vessel to hold water, (5 — 7); One **Tambia**, as before, (1 — 2); One **Samaee**, brass lamp standing, (3 — 5); Saree and Bodice, recently a polka. (20 — 40); clothes for ordinary use for 1 year (20 — 30).

PRESENTS FROM THE BRIDE-GROOM

Ear-ornaments :

Ear-Rings of gold, (30 — 50); **Bigbali** or **Khutbalia** of gold (now obsolete), (15 — 25).

Neck-ornaments :

Kanti of gold; (300 — 500); **Gatley** of gold, (150 — 200);

Doolori of gold (150 — 300); Vajaratik of gold (50 — 70); Thoosl of gold, (150 — 200); chain of silver (now obsolete) (30 — 40).

Ornaments for the arms :

Baragote of silver (obsolete), (30 — 40); Vellas or Bhowtey of silver for arms (obsolete), (30 — 40); Hirabangdia of gold (300 — 400); Todas of gold, (300 — 500); Kangnies of gold, (60 — 100); 1 Gold ring, (20 — 30); 1 silver ring (obsolete), (1 — 2).

Feet Ornaments (obsolete) :

Anklets or Pahial of silver, (100 — 150); foot chains of silver or Todas, (100 — 150).

Saree of silk, (50 — 100); Saree of cotton, (15 — 30); 2 Bodices, (5 — 15); Polka, (7 — 12).

As soon as the ornaments are handed over to the bride, the men return either to their own houses or to that of the bride-groom, The bride is then taken into a room where the ornaments are put on her; but she does not dress in the silk saree or the bodice presented by the bride-groom on that day. For among the Ben-Israel, the bride is generally dressed at the time of the marriage ceremony at the expense of her parents and not of her husband, however costly the dress he may have brought for her may be, unless the father receives from the bride-groom the marriage expenses of the bride. The taking of the money for the marriage expenses of the bride is called "Dez". In the evening people assemble at the boy's house, where in former times they were served with a slight repast called "Hat Jevan". It consisted of a cake and peas or meat seasoned with spices; but the practice of giving this repast has been entirely extinct for the last 30 years. The bride-groom then arrayed himself in a festive robe ,and the bride decked herself in festive Saree and bodice, redolent with sweet odour *). The bride-groom wore on his head a nuptial turban, which generally consisted of a rich Phetta or a shawl, or a turban embroidered with gold and a nuptial crown or garland **). The turban was also irradiated with pearls of great value as the word "Atarah", which means a costly turban, indicates; while the bride wore a bridal chaplet, "adoring

*) Ps. XLV. 8. Can. IV. 10—11.

**) Isa. LXI 10. Cant. III. 11.

herself with Jewels" *); but whether the bridal chaplet and the nuptial crown or garland which the bride and bride-groom wore on their heads in ancient times had any hangings of flowers that would fall over and conceal their faces such as are seen among Bene-Israel now-a-days cannot now be ascertained. These hangings are attached to the bridal chaplet and to the nuptial crown or garland, as will be seen from the figure we have given elsewhere. They are called "Sherra" by the Bene-Israel. The practice of tying these Sherras round the head of the bride and bride-groom is fast dying out, being strongly condemned by the Cochin and Arabic Jews, who allege it to be a pagan custom. This shows that they betray very little knowledge of the old Hebrew customs. Instead of these Sherras the Bene-Israel now throw on the back of the bride and bride-groom a network of flowers from head to foot. It is called "Sultani Sherra", which appears to have been borrowed from the Mahomedans. A Khangir or a dagger is tucked in the waist of the bride-groom, as is done among the Mohamedans, and a coconut covered with tinsel is placed in his hand as is done among the Hindus as a symbol of fruitfulness, but both these customs are now obsolete. From Judges XIV. 11. we know that the practice of having companions to the bride-groom obtained in very ancient times and the Bene-Israel still observe it. They adorned the companions with garlands of flowers which they threw accross their shoulders and which hung down either to the right or to the left. At last, when the fixed hour arrives which is generally late in the evening, the bridgroom sets forth from his house on a richly-decked horse, attended by his companions and the invited friends, preceded by a band of musicians and accompanined by persons bearing flambeaux, while a man holds a large China silk umbrella over the bride-groom's head, and two others fan him through out the procession. When the procession starts it is the habit with some men to break a hen's egg under the foot of the horse, or to dash a coconut on the ground near the hoof of the horse, in imitation of the practice of Hindus and Mohamedans; but this practice is almost going out of use. In this manner the bride-groom was led in procession to the bride's house. The practice of leading the bride-

*) Ps. XLV. 13—14; Isa. XLIX. 18 LXI. 10.

groom in procession seems to be an oriental one, and we find traces of it in the Bible (Genesis XXXI. 27. Jeremiah VII. 34; XVI. 9.) But now where there is a synagogue the bride-groom is taken to it either on horse-back or in a carriage for the solemnization of marriage, and this practice seems to have been followed for the last 30 years. When the bride-groom enters the synagogue a song is recited and he is seated on a chair until the arrival of the bride. As soon as the bride arrives with her maidens and parents she is brought into the synagogue by her father, and made to sit on one of the chairs reserved for the bride and bridegroom; and their fahers always sit at their back, i.e. the bride's father at the back of the bride and the bride-groom's father at the back of the bride-groom. Before we proceed with the dscription of the marriage ceremony we must state that the bride places a P h a d k i , which serves the purpose of a veil and which is a small silken or cotton shawl, on her head in such a way as to cover her face completely. The hair of a virgin bride is kept flowing at the time of marriage, as was done in ancient times (Mishnah, Ketuboth XXIV, II, 1). When a remarriage takes place among the Bene-Israel, the woman who is to be remarried is dressed in a white Saree and bodice, and after the ceremony she is dressed in rich clothes. Among the Bene-Israel a bachelor marries a virgin and not a widow, a spinster may marry a widower but a widow marries a widower only. A remarriage is not performed in a synagogue but at the house of the widow or at her father's, and the festivities never last more than one day. No music is played at such a marriage.

Formerly the guests invited on the occasion of the marriage used to wear a long cloak called J a m a , tie a cloth round their waists, put on long and loose pantaloons and wear a turban of peculiar fashion called " B i n i ". Now-a-days the Bene-Israel put on their usual dress when they go to a wedding. The old fashioned marriage dress has gone out of use.

The bride-groom is next led before the bride and is made to stand facing the girl, while a song is being recited. The hems of their garments are not tied together at this stage (as mentioned by the G a z e t t e e r), but after the solemnization of marriage. The bride-groom then puts on his fringe, and his father stands behind

him. The guests stand on both sides of the bride and bride-groom, and the rest sit down; while the ladies sit down or stand up in the gallery of the synagogue. A glass full of grape juice is handed to the bride-groom. It contains a ring called "Akda", either of gold or silver ,and is quite different in size from the ring presented on the day of betrothal. The bride-groom then begins with the following marriage ceremony :—

Bride-groom with your permission.
Congregation With the permission of Heaven (God).
Bride-groom By order of our Rabbins.
Congregation By order of Heaven.
Bride-groom O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good.
Congregation Because His mercy endureth for ever.
Bride-groom May joy increase among Israel.
Congregation And may it be spread like this day in Jerusalem.
Bride-groom May the holy Temple be rebuilt and the Prophet Elijah and Messiah the son of David come and gladden, rejoice and make merry the hearts of the people of Israel. Blessed art thou, O Lord, Our God, King of the Universe who createst the fruit of vine. Blessed art thou, O Lord, Our God, King of the Universe who hast sanctified us with thy commandments and commanded and imposed on us chastity and restrained us from the betrothed, but hast permitted us those who are married to us by means of the nuptial canopy and wedlock. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who sanctified Israel by means of the nuptial canopy and wedlock.

The bride-groom then drinks half of the wine.

The Bene-Israel do not dash the glass to pieces on the ground as is done among the Jews. The Kaji or the Hazan (Reader) then reads the Ketuba, i.e. the deed of marriage which, as well as the present mode of solemnizing the marriage ceremony, was introduced by David Rahabi, and does not differ from the usual Jewish marriage ritual.

The bride-groom then signs the marriage covenant in presence of two witnesses, and the Kaji or the Reader also signs it. Rolling

up the marriage covenant he hands it to the bride-groom, who delivers it to the bride saying "Take in thy hands this thy covenant and thy document by which all that I posses or can exercise my authority over as written therein in presence of these elders and witnesses be thine in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel. "This is thy covenant". The bride then hands it over to her father who keeps it for her.

After this, a song is sung in praise of God who has favoured them with the inheritance of the Law which describes that the bride-groom is adorned by this garments, among men, and the bride by the nuptial ceremony ,among women.

Two more glasses are filled with the grape juice, of which one is handed to the bride-groom, and the other is given to the Reader, who repeats the graces.

The bride-groom then drinks half of the grape juice from the glass in his hand and he makes the bride drink the other half. After this the "L a c h a" or the necklace consisting of a golden muny and glass beads, is handed over to the father of the bride to be tied round her neck. The Kaji or the Hazan (Reader) drinks a little of the grape juice from the glass in his hand and hands over the rest to the Shamash for the puropse of pouring the same into the chatty, in which there is a large quantity of grape juice kept for distribution among the congregants. Besides this ,there was a custom among the Bene-Israel of making S h u r b u t of jaggery or sugar for distribution among the marriage guests, in place of grape juice, which the Palestinian Hebrews stored in jars at the birth of a son, and distributed on the occasion of his marriage. The bride-groom then sits on the right side of the bride on a chair and the hems of their handkerchiefs are tied together. His father sits behind the bride-groom and the skirt of his (the father's) handkerchief and that of the girl's father are tied together for some time. The tying of the hems or their handkerchiefs means nothing more than that they are united. The Reader then blesses the bride and the bride-groom.

Next comes gift-making or A h a i r. The bride's father or mother hands over the Reader a gold ring of the value of from Rupees 5 to Rs. 20 for the purpose of presenting it to the bride-

groom, who, after having been served with a little sugar, receives it. Other gifts follow, which are either presented to the bride-groom, bride or their parents and male relatives, as the case may be; and the nature of the presents, and the name of the presenter is stated by the Reader. When cash was presented to the bride or bride-groom or to anybody else, an anna for each gift was given by the presenter to the Kaji or the Reader in former times, but this practice is now-a-days done away with. Also copper coins, which were waved round the head of the bride and bride-groom and were given to the bride's maid who held a lamp during the marriage ceremony, is out of use since marriage have been solemnized in synagogues. The practice of filling up the lap of the bride with five pieces of almonds, dry dates and betelnut ,as well as of giving these articles to the headman and the Kaji has also gone out of use. The fathers of the bride and bride-groom used to give some money for a treat. It is now generally added to the synagogue fund, but where there are no synagogues, it is spent in buying sweetmeat for distribution among relatives. The hems of the garments of the parties above-named are not united until this amount is handed over to the Kaji or the Reader. The knot of the bride and bride-groom's garments remains tied together as before till they are loosened a day or two afterwards by some body. The bride and bride-groom then leave their places and are taken to the H e k a l (the ark) where they kiss the T o r a h or the Scroll of the Law, after which they are led out from the synagogue.

The bride and bride-groom then holding each other's little fingers fast, leave the synagogue. At this moment torches are lit up and carriages in which children have come to the synagogue are driven ahead in order. Musicians begin playing their music and follow them. All the guests present walk on foot, and the bride seated in a palanquin or a carriage, and the bride-groom on horseback, bring up the rear. They are followed by three "W a r e e s" or "B a g a s". While the procession moves on, a large silk umbrella is held over the bride-groom, and, on either side, there are silver fans and a flylap. Some people let off fire-works. In short the procession is in imitation of the pomp of a royal march, and the bride-groom is regarded as a King for the time being, and hence

this pageantry and show. The practice of leading the bride-groom in procession has been of an old standing, (Dr. Smith's Bible Dictionary, "Marriage"). This pageantry of going in procession is not only to be seen in the case of well-to-do people but is also imitated by the middle and poor classes, as a result of which they are frequently over-head and ears in debt, and have to suffer great inconvenience and financial anxiety.

As soon as the procession reaches the door of the bride's house, her brother and the bride-groom meet face to face, and after putting some sugar into the mouth of each other, they embrace each other. Among some families the ear of the bride-groom is squeezed, but we do not know the origin of this practice. Some woman will also often be found to bring a handful of cooked rice, or what they called "Ambat Bhat", in a dish and after waving it round the head of the bride-groom to throw it into the street. This practice is fast dying out. The bride and bride-groom are then led with singing into the house and seated on a rich seat side by side, and the women guests follow the couple; while the male guests sit in the marriage hall. The married sister of the bride and her husband ,or some other female relative and her husband wash the feet of both the bride and bride-groom, the husband pours the water, and his wife washes his feet. This practice would seem a novel one to those who do not know the oriental custom of hospitality. Among the ancient Hebrews it was usual to offer water for washing the feet as soon as a guest appeared at the door (Gen. XVIII. 4; XIX. 2; XXIV. 32; XLIII. 24; Judg. XIX. 21.). This practice is still observed by the Bene-Israel even in ordinary cases when one comes from a village or a town. It was also considered a more complimentary act if the host or somebody of its family actually performed the office for his guest (1 Sam. XXV. 41.). As soon as the feet of the bride-groom are washed, the bride-groom puts a Rupee or two into the tray held forth and they are presented to the female relative who washes his feet. The bride and bride-groom are then served with milk and rice. At first the bride and bride-groom put five morsels of food into the mouth of each other and then proceed without any such ceremonial help. As soon as this is over, the bride-groom removes into the marriage hall and sits among the male guests;

the bride sits among the female guests. The parents of the bride give a feast to all the guests that are present. Grace is repeated before and after meals. When they were in religious ignorance, and did not know Hebrew, our people repeated "B e s h e m A d o n a i" only at dinner or suppertime. After the feast is over, Pansupari is handed round and the guests retire. The bride and bride-groom are then led to a separate room where they pass the night.

Next morning, that is on the third day, the bride and bride-groom wash their mouths and bathe, and are seated face to face, when they are served with breakfast consisting of milk and S h e - v a y a or Vermicelli, of which they put five morsels into the mouth of each other, and then they help themselves. Two hours later (about 11 a.m.) those relatives who have been invited begin to come in, and a meal of rice and split peas with fish and pickles is served. After the meal is over, most of the relatives go home and a few of the female relatives stay behind. In some cases the bride and bride-groom are made to bite piecs of betel-leaves out of each other's mouth when other young married couples also do the same, but this practice is also extinct. In this way the whole day is spent in merriment. About 4 p.m. the bride's hair which was left flowing at the time of marriage is now combed, braided and decked with flowers, and she is dressed in the Saree, bodice and other ornaments presented by the bride-groom. The hair of the mother of the bride-groom was combed and dressed likewise. Some songs exciting laughter are then sung. After this amusement, all the female guests go home. In the evening guests begin to arrive at the house of the bride's father, when the bride and the bride-groom are given a slight repast. After this is over, the lap of the bride is filled with five pieces of almonds, dry dates and betelnut, as a symbol of fruitfulness. The bride and bride-groom then stand side by side. Five married women step forth, and the bride-groom salutes them; formerly they threw grains of rice on the bride and bride-groom, as a symbol of fruitfulness. After this is done, they give the bride and bride-groom some presents and bless them. When this is finished the bride and bride-groom are led out : the bride-groom is placed on horse back and the bride is carried in a palanquin or carriage. In procession they are taken to the synagogue as before, and after

receiving blessings they are taken to the house of the bride-groom. A Rupee and a quarter is given to the synagogue fund, half a Rupee to the Hazan (Reader) and a quarter of a Rupee to the Shamash (Beadle) for blessing the bride and bride-groom. But this practice of leading the bride and bride-groom in procession on the second day has almost been discontinued. The Gazetteer is not right in saying that a goat is slain at the door of the marriage hall, and that blood is sprinkled in a line from the hall to the house door for the boy and the girl to walk along it. It is not now ,and it never had been before, a custom of the Bene-Israel. After the bride and bride-groom have come in, the bride-groom says to his parents "Take this your pair", and thus the bride-groom sits on his father's lap and the bride on that of her mother-in-law. The father then gives some money for the treat which generally consists of sweet-meat as it is to be partly enjoyed by the children. The feet of the bride and bride-groom are then washed either by his sister and her husband or by his brother and his wife. The bride then puts into the tray half as many Rupees as the bride-groom had put the previous evening. They are presented to the female relative who washes their feet. After this, a feast used to be given to the community in former times by the bride-groom's father, but now-a-days it is dispensed with. Only relatives of the bride and bride-groom dine together on this night.

On the fourth day, about seven in the morning, the bride and bride-groom are served with breakfast at the bride-groom's house. About 11 a.m. all the relatives that are invited come in and they are served with a meal of rice and split peas. In the evening the bride and bride-groom, when early marriages took place, were seated on two low wooden stools and were given a cold bath by the five married women who were generally their relatives , and who made them play with each other; but this is now done away with since adult marriages have been the rule among the Bene-Israetl. In fact, now-a-days the bride and bride-groom bathe one after the other in bath rooms. Female relatives are presented with Sarees on this night by the parents of the bride and bride-groom. A dinner is given to all the relatives who are present on the occasion, after which all the company withdraws. On this night the marriage crown of the

bride-groom and the bridal chaplet of the bride are removed, and are either thrown into the sea or tied to the roof of the house. The marriage of a son, excluding the cost of ornaments and clothes, costs a Bene-Israel from Rupees 200 — 500, and that of a daughter from Rupees 100 — 200. Formerly, the marriage ceremonies lasted for seven days with much merriment and fun.

CHAPTER VII.

DEATH

Among the Bene-Israel it used to be a custom in former times for persons to go and enquire after the health of a relative, friend or acquaintance when he was on his death bed and to try to console him as much as they could; but since the diffusion of religious knowledge among them ,the Psalms of David are read to a sick person in his mother tongue, so that he may repent of his sins. Now-a-days some chant the "prayer and confession" as given in their ritual. But arrangements such as are made among the Jews of foreign countries are not found among the Bene-Israel. Among the foreign Jews the minister of the congregation, to which the sick person belongs, comes to his house and exhorts him to repent of his sins whereas the poor Bene-Israel are left perfectly uncared for in this respect when they are about to die. It is indeed a sad thing that there are no such societies among the Bene-Israel as are found among the foreign Jews. The latter depute men to watch the sick both by day and night, as long as he is alive, and to superintend the due solemnization of his obsequies after his death. For want of this kind of arrangement among the Bene-Israel, each and every family has to look after its sick persons, and the members of the family being thus distressed and perplexed in mind are often entirely at a loss to know what to do. Such being the case with well-to-do Bene-Israel families, the condition of the poorer ones threatened with death may better be imagined than described.

If a sick person among the Bene-Israel lingers on in his sickness, his relatives get him shaved, and get the nails of his hands and feet pared. He is then bathed and dressed in clean and white clothes, and is laid on a clean bed. If a dying person belongs to a well-to-do family, some of his relatives sit near him read-

ing the Psalms of David, until he breathes his last. The Reader of the congregation or the Kaji is very rarely to be seen on such occasions. Most of these Readers whether they are Bene-Israel or Jews only know how to read Hebrew, but do not understand the meaning of what they read.

The late David Samuel Divekar Commandant, otherwise called Dada Commandan, deserves, according to what old people tell us about him, the greatest credit for the care he took of the sick and suffering members of the community. When cholera was raging dreadfully in Bombay some sixty or seventy years ago, and when none who could help it would leave his home, there used to take place more than two or three burials every day, and yet the Commandan contrived to make suitable provision for their due performance.

When the spark of life is fast ebbing away, drops of Sherbat made of sugar or juice or grapes, are poured into the mouth of the dying. His eyes and mouth are then closed, and as soon as his spirit departs, Keriyath Shema meaning "Hear O Israel the Lord our God, is one Lord", is repeated. After the soul has departed, water from all pots and pans, not only from those in the apartment of the dead, but from the rooms of all the other inmates of the house, is poured away. This practice obtained among the old Israelites, and is in vogue among the Bene-Israel. The frocks of the mourners are then rent, after saying the following blessing :— "Blessed art thou, O Lord, our King, King of the Universe, the righteous judge." The body is covered with a white sheet and the cot occupied by the dead is placed with its upper end turned towards the east and the lower towards the west. It is difficult by any description to give an adequate idea of the weeping and wailing that is to be heard in a house where there has been a case of death. The mourners give vent to their feeings by a variety of actions. Some of them, generally women, beat the breast immediately after life has become extinct; othere express their feelings by excessive weeping, wailing and uttering of the praises of the dead. In short a man in whose house someone died, feels as though mountains of grief had been hurled upon his head, and to add to his distress he has to send for the Shamash, and to tell

him to announce the intelligence of death all round among the members of the community, he has also to request somebody to fetch shrouds, and to send labourers to dig the grave.

The widow of the deceased does not "dash her bangles" and "break them against the cot", nor does she "break her black bead necklace called Lacha" immediately after life is extinct, as stated by the Gazetteer.*) Breaking the bangles and the necklace of black beads and taking off the nose-ring takes place after the corps has been washed (Tahara), and when it is lifted to be taken either to the coffin or to the bier to be buried. The ornaments above-named are never worn by a woman as long as she remains a widow, and she only wears them after remarriage. The great toes of the dead person are tied together with a thread so that the legs may not hang loose. Shortly afterwards a white cloth is brought for the shrouds, some yards of that cloth are made into a lungi or a sheet of white cloth tied round the waist of the dead at the time of washing, and hanging as far as the knee; some into a towel for wiping the dead body; some yards of it are also used for making a shirt or frock, trousers or long drawers, Kaphni or Talith i.e. (a kind of garment with an aperture of about a foot and a half long in the centre through which the head is put, when wearing, so that one part of the garment falls upon the breast and the other upon the back. It is worn next the frock or shirt), Saya or a long cloak, and the Sissith, or the fringe with four corners ,which the deceased was in the habit of using when alive. A handkerchief, a Kerchief for the face, a cap, a Dupetta or a turban, putka or neckcloth, a Kumberband or a girdle, a sheet of three pieces stitched together at one side called mot, and a pillow, if the deceased be a male, are required. If the deceased be a female, the following things are wanted :— a lungi, a sheet of white cloth as in the case of a male, a surpos or a sheet thrown over the body of the deceased at the time of giving her the cleansing bath, a towel, a pair of trousers or drawers, a shirt, a Sari called Patal, neck-cloth, a Khol or a kind of hood, a girdle, a kerchief for the head ,a handkerchief and a kerchief for the face, a mot a described above

*) Bombay Gazetteer vol. XVIII part 1 page 532.

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*) Bombay Gazetteer vol. XVIII part 1 page 532.

in the case of a male, and a pillow. The K h o l spoken of above is sent by the father or brother of the deceased female. The cost incurred in preparing the shrouds varies from Rs. 7—25. They may be sewn either by a Bene-Israel, or by an ordinary tailor. Formerly, only Israelites performed this duty. The dead body is then rubbed with coconut milk and soap and is washed in warm water on the cot under which a large tub is placed to catch the water used, and while this is done the l u n g i is tied round the waist. The Kaji or the Reader or any one of the Bene-Israel, who can repeat Hebrew texts, recites the prescribed text. The body of the deceased is then bathed in cold water in the following manner :— cold water, brought in an open mouthed copper vessel called a H a n d a, is placed near the dead. It contains Subja and rose flowers. The minister takes water from the vessel in a new earthen pot, and pours it over the dead, from the head to the feet, and the earthen pot is then dashed to pieces on the ground near the feet. After seven pots have been thus poured over the body and in turn dashed to the ground, the eighth one is kept filled with cold water together with a towel used for wipping the dead body, and a lamp is kept constantly burning near it, day and night, for seven days, as the spirit of the deceased is supposed to visit this apartment during the whole 7 days of mourning. This practice has prevailed among the Bene-Israel from very old times. The copper vessel was presented in former times (and is done so even at present in some cases) to the person who poured the water of the T a h a r a.

After the cold bath is over, if the deceased be a male, the corpse is wiped by males with a clean kerchief or towel and is dressed in trousers and a shirt, if female the corpse is dressed by females in trousers, shirt and a P a t a l, i.e. a kind of white Sari generally made of mullmul, is fastened round the body. The deceased is then brought out into the assembly of men and placed on a m o t or sheet. The Reader or the Kaji then signs a dirge in a doleful tone, in which the soul accuses the body for having committed sins, while the body utters similar accusations against the soul.

While this dirge is being sung, two men put the head of the deceased, if he be a male, through the aperture of the Talith,

and make him wear the Saya or a long cloak. A neck cloth hanging loose as far as his knees is then passed round the neck. A turban or a dupeta is next tied round his head, over which they put on the Sissith with one of its fringes bitten off, and lastly a girdle is fastened round the waist. Some spices or powder of frank-incnse, otherwise called Udkatri or Jikhra, are scattered over and thrown into the shroud. It is made up of artemisia, sweet marjoram, and ropogon murricatum, a fragrant drug called gavla, cyperus pertinuis, flacourtia sapida, sandal dust, rose flowers, fragrant drug called Kutchree and Narka-choor etc. It also consists of a small quantity of coal of milk-bush. Some also put in camphor. A twig of Subja is tied by a handkercheif to the right hand of the deceased, and his palms are kept the one over the other as in an attitude of prayer. A pinchful of Jerusalem earth is thrown into the eyes and mouth of the dead; flakes of cotton are placed on the eyes and the mouth, and the face is then covered with a handkerchief. The body is then wrapped up in a sheet called "mot", consisting of three folds in the following manner :—

A fold is taken up from that part of the sheet where there are two folds, and is passed from the head to the feet of the dead, and its end is placed below the back, the part of the sheet which has only one fold is then taken up and similarly passed round from the head to the feet and placed under the back. The third fold is also passed round in the same manner. The shroud is then tied tight at the top of the head and at the waist and at the bottom of the feet. Rose water is sprinkled over the shroud shortly after, and the Reader or Kaji who may be officiating, asks the company to forgive any faults the deceased might have committed. As soon as they answer, "the deceased is forgiven," the body is lifted up and placed in a coffin. It is covered with black or white cloth both inside and outside and has some handles with which to lift it up. Wreaths of rose flowers and Subja are thrown over it and it is carried to the cemetery on the shoulders of the funeral party. Usually the corpse is carried in a bier which is the property of the synagogue. It resembles in size a cot with four legs, except that it has four projections near the upper part of the legs to

enable the funeral party to carry it on their shoulders wihout inconvenience. It has also a railing all round over which there is placed a curved or arched frame. The inner part of the bier is interwoven with cane work or the fibrous integuments of cocoanuts, i.e. C o i r. A white sheet is spread inside the bier and the corpse is laid on it. A shawl or veil is then spread over the arched frame with wreaths of rose flowers and subja. S h e m a I s r e l i.e. Hear O Israel! the Lord our God, is one Lord" is repeated when the bier with the corpse in it is lifted up to be taken to the burial ground. It is the mourners who carry it on their shoulders first. After they have gone some 5 or 10 paces, all the persons who form the funeral party carry the bier on their shoulders in turn, as far as the burial ground. While the corpse is being carried away the Kaji, Reader, or any other person officiating in the absence of the former two, repeats in lamentable tone the funeral prayers.

The coffin or the bier is then carried into the hall built for that purpose, called the B e t h H a i m i.e. "The house of living", where the mourners and the funeral party sit if the grave is not ready. As soon as it is ready, the coffin or the bier is taken to the grave. The corpse is placed in the grave, the head being directed towards the East and feet towards the West. A handful of earth is given by each one present on the occasion to be placed in a bag which is put under the head of the dead as a pillow. The men who have gone down into the grave scatter earth on the sides and over the body of the dead and re-ascend to the surface, only a small part of the coffin or the shroud being left uncovered. The mourners and all the men present then throw handfuls of earth into the grave.

After this is done, and the prescribed prayers recited, the funeral party retires and each one while going out of the burial yard, plucks some grass and throws it behind his back, a symbolical act signifying that "They shall spring forth from the city, as the grass of the earth" *). Almost all the men with the exception of the mourners that attend the funeral, bathe themselves, and even wash their clothes, before they resume their usual avocation as directed

*) That is to say, at the day of the Resurrection.

in numbers, XIX. The relatives and friends accompany the mourners to their house where they wash their hands and feet before entering. It is customary among the Bene-Israel to observe mourning for the following eight relatives :— Father and mother, brother and sister, son and daughter, husband and wife. The relatives and friends bring from their respective homes "meals of condolence," which they partake of with the mourners. The period *) of mourning lasts for seven days, during which the mourners are not allowed to do any kind of work, nor even to go out of the house. The men and women generally cover the lower part of the face and smetimes the head in token of silence. They are not to seat themselves upon a chair or a bench, nor to wear their shoes or their usual ornaments, but to sit or lie on the ground in silence indicative of their grief. Mourners do not even sleep on their beds during the mourning week but on the floor. All kinds of amusement are prohibited; cutting the beard, shaving the head, washing or changing clothes is not allowed, not even on the Sabbath; nor are they allowed to put on the Sabbath dress on the Sabbath that falls during the period of mourning. The only consolaion they enjoy in this season of sorrow is the visits of friends and relatives. To visit the mourners is considered a meritorious act; consequently visits are very numerous from relations and acquaintances, and strangers. For this purpose the door is left open to receive the visits of all who may come. The visitor makes no salutation on entering the room as on other occasions, nor do the mourners pay attention to him. If he feels inclined to be seated he sits near the mourner without any ceremony, as a matter of course. On retiring they comfort him with words of consolation. In like manner the female visitors go to the female mourners.

If the burial takes place before sunset, relatives and friends come to the mourner's house in the morning and evening, for seven days, when they read prayers, at the end of which the Reader reads the burial service in the name of the dead person, and the

*) Numbers, XIX. 11.

chief mourner reads Kaddish, *) after which the visitors drink grape juice or milk or other drink in honour of the dead in the evening; while in the morning light refreshments such as tea, bread, plantain etc. are given every day during the period of the mourning, except on Saturday (the Sabbath), when tea is omitted. This being done, the grace after meal is repeated, when the usual prayer for mourners is recited.

But if the mourner is a poor-class Bene-Israel, relatives and friends go to his house every evening and read the burial service in the name of the dead, in whose honour the visitors drink grape juice, milk, or other drink during the days of mourning. During the period of mourning, the mourners, both of the well-to-do and those of the poor classes of the Bene-Israel, abstain from meat, and sit or lie on the ground, where mats are spread. On the third day of the mourning, the house of the mourners is cleansed, or what they call purified, either by cow-dunging the floors or washing the floor with water; and all the clothes of the household are washed, as directed in Numbers XIX. 11-12. The practice of the third day purification among Bene-Israel is called "T i z w a" and has prevailed among them from time immemorial, and has been uninterruptedly followed up to this day. On the morning of the seventh day, the eighth earthen chatty which was filled with water on the first day is removed to the burial ground, where more than ten relatives and friends accompany the mourners. The loose earth with which the grave was filled on the first day is now properly adjusted with spades and other tools in order that it may settle well into the grave; the spot is then well beaten, lest any portion of earth should become displaced from the grave. The water in the chatty kept at home for seven days is poured on the grave shortly after, and the chatty is then flung aside. There was in former times a practice among the Bene-Israel of offering food at the grave — a practice analogous to a similar custom among the Jews of Palestine in later days, as mentioned in Ecclesiasticus XXX. 18. Though this institution appears to have been lately discontinued by the Bene-Israel, a

*) The Kaddish does not contain any prayer for the dead, but merely expresses the mourner's resignation to the will of the Almighty.

vestige of it is still to be seen among them, for the tray filled in the name of the dead on the seventh day ceremony, which is called Jaharut, and placed on the clean towel (taken out of the Shrouds) and used on every occasion, the obsequies of the deceased are performed, is nothing more than a genuine symbol of the food offered at the grave in former times. The tray contains pieces of cakes fried in oil, goat's liver, Subja twigs, a small quantity of boiled rice, a cup of wine or liquor over which the burial service is read. From the probable date when the above-mentioned Apocryphal book seems to have been written, i.e. about 250 — 170 B.C., it can clearly be concluded that the practice in question was in force before the emigration of the ancestors of the Bene-Israel. In fact, the prevalence of this institution amongst the Bene-Israel even until now, corroborates our position that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel left Palestine for India about 2000 years ago.

Some people on the occasion of the seventh day ceremony, and some during the sixth or eleventh month after death, put a slab on to the grave, at its head, with an inscription engraved thereon containing the name of the deceased and his father's name, his surname, his age and the date of his death. In the case of a woman married, unmarried or widow, her name, surname, age and date of her death only are engraved. Before the return of the mourners and the men that accompany them, the Reader or Kaji reads the burial service for the dead, and Kaddish is said by the Chief mourner. After their return from the burial ground in about an hour or so, the mourners bathe and change their mourning clothes. By the time the mourners have bathed, the men who attended the funeral come to the mourner's house for Jaharat (or seventh day ceremony) and sit in the hall, where in the middle of the party a piece of the cloth of the shroud is placed with twigs of Subja over it. The Hazan (Reader) or the Kaji then first of all acknowledges the unity of the God-head by repeating Keryath Shema, which is also recited by the people assembled. The Hazan (Reader) or the Kaji then commences the ceremony by reading the 9th Psalm, and is followed by the select party who read Alpha Betha so called on account of Ps. 119 which is an acrostic on the Hebrew Alphabets, from the 25th verse of the CXVIII to CXXXV Psalm.

After this is done, the burial service is read by the Hazzan (Reader) or by the Kaji, and the Kaddish is repeated by the chief mourner. The party assembled are then served with a mourning feast, as described in Jeremiah XVI. 7—8. Immediately after or before the feast ,the chief mourner used to be presented by his relatives with a new turban, which he then wore, and the party after having taken Pansupari, retires. This concludes the observance of mourning.

In the evening again friends and relatives resort to the house of the mourners, whom they take to the synagogue, where Hash-kaba or the burial service is read for the dead, and a blessing is given to the mourners by the Reader. The mourners then make an offering to the Synagogue, and if they are well-to-do in circumstances ,they direct the Reader to continue repeating Hashkaba in the synagogue for a year, for which they pay to the synagogue from Rs. 5 to 15. The mourners are then taken home and the party disperses. The next morning the mourners resume their usual work.

On the fifteenth and the thirtieth day and at the end of the third, the sixth and the eleventh months, relatives and friends are invited by well-to-do people to their house, when the burial service is read by the Reader, and the Kaddish by the mourner, and feasts are given according to the means of the mourners. During the eleven months after death, the mourners go to the synagogue every Sabbath and repeat Kaddish. The anniversary of the death of parents is called Jaharet,*) and is held on the same day of the month as that on which they died.

We shall close this chapter by tracing the history of some of the burial grounds used by our people since their residence in Bombay. We at one time entertained the hope of fixing the date of our ancestors' coming to the City of Bombay from the Konkan for the first time, by ascertaining the date of a free grant of a site by the Government to our people shortly after their arrival in that place. We therefore requested the Collector of Bombay to supply us with this date, as also the dates of the grants of the three other sites. That officer kindly furnished us with the dates of the grants of two sites only — the one on the Byculla flats and the other near the Grant Road; but he was not able to supply us with any information

*) Probably a corruption of "Jahrzeit" (I. O.).

as to when Government granted the first two sites — the one near a well called Gunga Bow, or a well in Mazagon; and the other near Dick's Talao, or Sir Jamsetji Jeejibhoy Hospital. Our anticipation of getting at the exact date of our first settlement in Bombay have thus been frustrated, and we can say only broadly that our people first came into the city of Bombay at least 150 years ago, if not earlier.

The first burial ground used by our people after their coming to Bombay is said to have been a barren part of the island somewhere in Mazagon, near a well called Gunga Bow, which is situated on the way to the old Mazagon Powder Works now owned by the Mazagon Land Reclamation Company. We visited the supposed place personally but the site could not be identified, though some of the oldest people say that a road passed across it, while others believe that the vacant ground near Gunga Bow surrounded by a wall with gates and used at present by washermen to wash clothes, was the burial ground, but no positive information about the site nor how long it was in use, can be had. The greater part of the ground where washermen wash clothes, has been ploughed and used for growing vegetables. Hence no marks of graves can be traced. There is a foot-path accross it that seems all that remains of the cemetery arrangements.

The next burial ground is situated near Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy's hospital in the neighbourhood of a tank which was dug by order of the late Mr. George Dick, Deputy Governor of Bombay. This burial ground can, however, still be seen with several graves of the Bene-Israel in it. One of these is a pukka chunam built tomb, but we cannot ascertain whose tomb it is, as there is no inscription on it. There are, however, two other graves which have slabs with the following inscriptions thereon. One of these is a grave of a Bene-Israel Native Commandant of one of the Regiments of the Bombay army, by name S o l o m o n E z e k i e l D i v e k a r, who died in the year 5542 of the creation of the world or about 113 years ago. The other inscription is that of the late Mr. D a n i e l K a d i, the son of A h i e l K a d i who died about 5539 A.M. or about 116 years ago.

From the place where and the dates at which the above named

persons were buried, it appears that the burial ground was nearly filled up with graves. It is said that this burial ground was in use for about thirty years.

The third burial ground is situated behind the David Sassoon Synagogue near the union of the Bellasis Junction Road and Clare Road, and was granted by Government on the 26th April 1785 in lieu of the burial ground near Dick's Talao or Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy's hospital. It was 6955 square yards in area. The compound wall of this burial yard was built at a cost of Rupees 3000 by Hassubai, widow of the late Bundoo Gudkar Maistry, and bears the following inscription on the slab fixed to the wall :—

"This compound wall was built by Hassubai Gudkarrin on Monday the first of Jaishta Vad (dark half) in the Shaki year 1758 corresponding to 1836 of the Christian era at the expense of Yetji Essoobji Gudkar, who died on Tuesday the sixth of Falgun Vad (dark half) in the Shaki year 1733, corresponding to 1811 of the Christian Era; Bapuji Yetji Gudkar, who departed from this world on Monday the first of Vaishak Shud (bright half) in the Shaki year 1740, corresponding to 1818 of the Christian Era; Sarahbai Gudkarrin, who died on Tuesday the fifteenth of Kartik Shudh (bright half) in the Shaki year 1750, corresponding to 1828 of the Christian Era, and who are buried in this burial yard; while Dawood Bunduji Gudkar who died on Monday the thirtieth of Shravan in 1757, corresponding to 1835 of the Christian Era, was buried in the new burial ground situated at Camatteepurra."

This cemetery contains many graves both of the Bene-Israel and of Jews with inscriptions thereon. It was handed over to the Trustees of the Shepherd's Alms House by Government, at the request of Rev. W. K. Fletcher, in 1844, on the distinct understanding that nothing would be done by the Trustees which would "reasonably offend the feelings of surviving relatives of those who lie buried in the ground." Later on, the key of this cemetery has been given over to the charge of Messrs. David Sassoon & Co., by the Trustees of the Shepherd's Alms House.

The fourth burial place was granted by Government on the 18th November 1832, in Kamateepura, in lieu of the above-mentioned ground, but the Grant Road being laid out across it, it was divided

into two portions — one to the North and the other to the South. The portion on the southern side was appropriated for the burial of the Kala Israel, while that on the North was used by the Gora Israel. Owing to the Grand Road running across this burial ground, Government was pleased to grant an additional ground measuring about 3872 square yards on the 17th January 1837. This ground was handed over by the Collector of Bombay on the 24th February 1837. But as soon as this additional piece of ground came into the hands of the late Mr. David Samuel Divekar, surnamed Dada Commandan, headman of the Bene-Israel community, the late Mr. Haskel Abdul Nubbee in behalf of the Jewish Community wrote to Government for permission to erect a partition wall to divide the Indian Jew's cemetery from that of the foreign Jews. But Government by their letter of 17 February 1837 declined to comply with the request.

When the stripe of the ground on the southern side of the Grant Road, used as a burial ground by the Kala Israel, was required for the improvement of the Grant Road and the extension of the Northbrook Garden, by the Municipality of Bombay, an agreement was entered into between the Municipal Commissioner and the representative of the Bene-Israel community from which the following extracts are given below :

"Articles of agreement made this nineteenth day of May 1892 between Edward Charles Kayll Olivant Municipal Commissioner for the city of Bombay of one part, and Ezekiel Abraham Divekar Commandant and Muccadam of the Jewish community of Bombay known as Bene-Israelites, for and on behalf of the said community of the other part. Whereas the burial ground of the said community situated at Grant Road is divided by the said Road.... and whereas the Commissioner having deemed it desireable for the improvement of the Grant Road and of the said Northbrook Garden to acquire the said strip of land on the south side of the Grant Road has applied to the Jewish community to make over to him the said strip of land for the purposes aforesaid which they have agreed to do on the terms and conditions herein after specified :

2. In consideration of the strip of ground so to be made over

to the Commissioner as provided in clause one, the Commissioner agrees that he will in exchange for the same make over or cause or procure to be made over to the said Community or to the said Ezekiel Abraham Divekar on their behalf a strip of land on the west side of the said main portion of their burial ground aforesaid such strip of land to be of an area equal to the area of the strip to be made over to the Commissioner as aforesaid and to be added to and form portion of their main burial ground aforesaid, and that the Commissioner will at the cost of the Municipality enclose the said strip of land to be made over under this clause with a proper boundary fence of the said main burial ground, and whatever else may be necessary for adding the said strip of land to the said main burial ground as aforesaid. ....."

Notwithstanding the above agreement nothing has yet been done to carry its terms into effect. The strip of the burying ground referred to in the agreement has been taken and utilized by the Municipal Commissioner for the improvement of the Grant Road and of the Northbrook Garden, but the strip of land on the west side of the main portion of the burial yard has not as yet been handed over to the Jewish Community, although more than 13 years have elapsed since the date of the execution of the above agreement, and a Cholera and other infectious diseases' Hospital has been instead built on the site proposed to be delivered in pursuance of the agreement. The late Mr. Ezekiel Abraham had before his death served the Municipal Commissioner with a notice under date the 19th March 1883, and also personally applied to the Municiapl Commissioner on several occasions. The Commissioner did not fulfil his part of the agreement, and the matter has been suffered to lie in abeyance until now. No doubt the representative of the Bene-Israel Community should not have given up the possession of the burial ground unless some guarantee was given that another would be provided in lieu of it; but relying on the promise of such a high official as the Commissioner, he did not hesitate to give up possession, and that promise should still remain in abeyance is certainly much to be regretted. *

*) It is much to be regretted that on this occasion a lack of unity was manifested by the different sections of the Community.

It is mainly due to such an attitude that damage was allowed to be done to the graves and tombs of the persons that lie buried in their own burial grounds near Dick's Talao and Camateepura, productive of great annoyance not only to the relatives of the deceased but to the whole community at large.

Three persons, representing three sections, have written to the municipality, each claiming for his section the sole proprietory rights over the ground in question.

CHAPTER VIII

RELIGION

The notion of the unity of the Godhead being primitive to the Bene-Israel, they worship one God and use no images. They have in their synagogues manuscript copies of the Pentateuch which they consider to be of divine authority. The first manuscript was obtained by the New Congregation in Bombay in 1840; while the Old Synagogue purchased three manuscripts in August 1847. The Bene-Israel do not preach their religion beyond the circle of their own people. The essence of their faith is, "Hear O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord." These words the Bene-Israel retained in memory even during their dark ages, and repeated them on every occasion of birth, marriage, death, vow-making etc. In fact, these words were and are the watch-words of the Bene-Israel, who repeat them with heart and soul thrice a day. The Bene-Israel also ends his earthly existence with the repetition of these words. Besides the belief in one God the Bene-Israel have the Thirteen Fundamental Articles of the Jewish Faith, as laid down by Maimonides.

Having given in the first chapter of this work an account of the religious rites observed by the Bene-Israel during the period of their ignorance, we shall now proceed to describe the fasts and feasts, which have been observed by them since the recent religious revival. We shall begin to describe them according to the order of the month is which they occur. The Bene-Israel, like all Jews in the world, reckon their days from sunset to sunset.

The Jewish year is of a double nature. It is lunar as well as solar. It is lunar in so far as its months are calculated in accordance with the revolutions of the moon, and therefore its months some-

times consist of twenty nine and sometimes of thirty days. It is solar since it is made to agree with the solar cycle of nineteen years. To effect this, an additional month is added about every third year. The intercalary or additional month is called Ve-Adar or Adar-Sheni (Second Adar). The first of every month is reckoned from the new moon. A year having thirteen months is called a Leap-year. The following are the names of the Hebrew months : —

Nissan, Iyar, Sivan, Tamuz, Ab, Ellul, Tishri, Heshwan, Kislev, Tebeth, Shebat, Adar.

Nissan. The month consists of thirty days and falls partly in March and partly in April. It was called Abib in Biblical times, and was the first of the religious, and the seventh of the civil year. On the fourteenth of this month, the feast of Passover is observed in commemoration of the miraculous deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The Sabbath which falls before Passover is called the Great Sabbath.

The peculiar feature of the feast of Passover, is that the Bene-Israel as well as the Jews use unleavened bread for eight days from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of the month, and not only abstain from every kind of leaven, but allow no leaven anywhere about their houses during these days. They even abstain from using tea, sugar, jaggery, clarified butter, etc. during the week of Passover. On the fourteenth day of the month all the first-born of the Bene-Israel, whether male or female, above the age of thirteen observe a fast. Sometimes children below thirteen observe it, but if they cannot do so ,their parents fast in their stead in token of the gratitude for the preservation of the first born of Israel at a time when God slew all the first-born of Egypt. Should the fast occur on a Sabbath, it is kept on the Thursday that precedes it. The feast of Passover lasts for eight days, as commanded in Exodus Chap XII 15. The first and the last two days of the festival are observed as sabbaths, the only exception being that the preparation and cooking of food are not prohibited in those days as they are on a Sabbath. The four middle days are regarded as festive days, on which people carry on their usual business. During the first two nights of this holiday, a table is laid out in the house of almost

every family with a dish on it, containing three pieces of unleavened bread symbolizing the haste of the Israelites, who when they departed from the land of Egypt were so hurried that they had no time left to wait while the dough was becoming leavened. They had therfore to remove the dough before it was leavened and bake it into bread as it was. This dish on the table also contains a roasted piece of the shank-bone of a lamb, which commemorates the Paschal offering, roasted eggs, the symbol of the festival sacrifice in former times, a mixture of dates, intended to remind the participants of the mortar used by our ancestors in Egypt, a cup of lime-juice together with a quantity of bitter herbs, in commemoration of the bitter oppression endured by our forefathers, and parsley in memory of our former servitude. Glasses and decanters filled with grape-juice are placed upon the table, and the history of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is read out from a Hebrew book called Haggadah, All the ceremonies enjoined in the book are then performed. This being done, the evening meals are partaken of and a number of hymns praising and glorifying God are chanted. While the service is going on, four small cups of grape-juice, and not of wine (as stated by the Bombay Gazetteer), are drunk by each member of the family. During the existence of the Temple an offering of an Omer of the newly reaped barley was ordered to be made from the second day of Passover (Lev. XXIII 9). From that day, the Bene-Israel counted forty nine days or seven complete weeks, and on the fiftieth they observed the Feast of Pentecost.

The reading of the history of the Exodus is a practice observed by those only of the Bene-Israel who have studied Hebrew;*) while those that are still in ignorance observe the week by abstaining only from using any kind of leaven during the time. The Bene-

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*) In 1911 the full text of the Haggada was published in Hebrew but in Devanagari (Sanskrit) Script by Daniel Shalom Kherilkar. The specimen given opposite is Ps. 117—118, 1—3.

हालल् एथ आदोनाय कोल गोइम शब्वेहह्
कोल हाउम्मीम. का गावार आलेनू हासदा वएमथ
आदोनाय लेओलाम हाललूयाह.
हाद् लादोनाय की तोव का लेओलाम हासदो,
यामार ना इसराएल का लेओलाम हासदो
योमरू ना बेथ आहारोन की लेओलाम हासदो
योमरू ना इरए आदोनाय को लेओलाग हासदो

Israel and their wives have a busy work of it before the setting in of the festivities, as all of them whitewash their houses, and get all the copper pots at home tinned and their old earthen chatties exchanged for new ones. In fact the house with all its furniture assumes a new aspect, and there are evident signs of renovation everywhere.

Iyar. This month has twenty-nine days, and extends over parts of April and May. It was called Ziv in Biblical times. On the fourteenth of this month, a "Second Passover" is observed by those persons who for some reason were prevented from keeping the first. But no instances of the observance of the second Passover in olden times can be found among the Bene-Israel.

Sivan. This month has always thirty days, and includes parts of May and June. On the sixth and seventh occurs the "Feast of Pentecost", or the "Feast of the Weeks", which name it has received because it is being solemnized seven complete weeks after Passover. This holiday was not observed by the Bene-Israel during their dark ages, as they did not possess the Bible. It is of quite late introduction among them.

Tammuz. This month has always twenty-nine days, and falls in June and July. On the seventeenth of this month a fast is observed in memory of the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Thousands of our ancestors perished during the siege, King Zedekiah was taken prisoner, his sons were slain in in presence, and his eyes were cut out by order of Nebuchadnezzar. Many years later, Titus the Roman Emperor broke through the walls of Jerusalem and laid siege to the Holy Temple. These events were attended with the slaughter of our ancestors. It is also said that the Tables of stone which had the Ten Commandments inscribed on them were broken on this day by Moses when he saw his people worshipping the molten calf. The fast of Tammuz is therefore considered as a very sad day in the history of Israel. "But in the fourth year of King Darius, in the fourth day of the ninth month, there came a deputation of the Hebrews to the Second Temple, anxious to know whether the fast days, which had been instituted during the seventy years' captivity were still to be observed, when Zechariah said that God loves mercy rather than

fasting, and truth and rightousness rather than sackcloths and a sad countenance, and announced, in obedience to the command of God, not only that the fasts are abolished, but that the days of mourning shall henceforth be days of joy, the fasts be counted for festivals". (Zech. VIII. 17.). It was under this authority that the four fasts of national mourning viz.: the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth ,were abolished during the time of the Second Temple, at a time when the first settlers or the ancestors of the Bene-Israel were still in Palestine. Consequently leaving Palestine (as we have endeavoured to show) during this period they did not reintroduce these observances among their descendants, as was done amongst those who remained in Palestine. Consequently the Bene-Israel did not observe them until the religious revival made by David Rahabi whose coming we have supposed to have been taken place about 900 years ago.

Ab. This month was alwvas thirty days. It falls partly in July and partly in August. On the ninth of this month, a fast is held by all the Jews and Israelites living on the face of the earth, in memory of the destruction of the First and Second Temples by Nebuchadnezzar and Titus, amidst dreadful scenes of fire and death. With the last of these two events our nationality ceased, and since then the Hebrews have been wandering in every quarter of the globe. On this day the Synagogues of the Bene-Israel and Jews alike present a very sad appearance. The scrolls of the law are stripped of their ornaments, and the Ark of its curtain. In fact, where usually a flood of light prevails, only a few sad flickering glimmers of it appear. The congregation sits on the ground, and the service is chanted in a low and mournful voice, special elegies descriptive of the sufferings of our ancestors are sung, and the book of Lamentations and that of Job are read, for the former contains the lamentations of Jeremiah, while the latter teaches how to practice resignation to the will of God. The Bene-Israel abstain from flesh from the first to the ninth of the month. The meals they take before the fast are served on plantain leaves, and the fast is broken by taking pulse with rice and bread. Many of the Bene-Israel are careful not to make new clothes either for themselves or for their

children, or to perform any auspicious ceremony such as marriage, the fulfillment of a vow, etc. in this month.

Ellul. This month has always twenty-nine days and extends over parts of August and September. This is a month specially dedicated to the preparation for the aproaching days of Judgment and expiation. Israelites therefore daily offer propitiatory prayers early in the morning at four o'clock called Selichoth. The devout Bene-Israel fast, taking only one meal every day in the evening during the month, except on Sabbath, when they do not observe the fast. At the time of the propitiatory prayers the Shofar (Ram's horn) is blown in the synagogue thrice at every time of prayer, when the congregation say "The Eternal is the immutable eternal Being! An omnipotent God! merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in beneficence and truth, keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and acquitting the sinner. Pardon thou our iniquity and our sin and take us for thine heritage." The blowing of the Shofar serves both as a warning tc the people to prepare for the approaching days of Judgment and Atonement, and as a memorial *) before God. On the last day of this month, the Shofar is not blown, but when the morning service is over, the congregation divides into two parties facing each other. One party stands, while the other sits. Those standing read the Hattara, or the prayer of forgiveness. Those sitting say, "As we forgive you, so may you be forgiven from on High". Then those that are standing, sit down and those that are sitting stand up, and in their turn ask and receive forgiveness. This having been done, they kiss one another's hands and return home, where children kiss the hands of the mothers and sisters. During this month new clothes are made and houses are whitewashed.

Tishree. This month has thirty days, extending over parts of September and October. This is the first month of the civil and the seventh of the religious year. In Biblical times, this month was known by the name Ethanim. It is the most important of all the months, on account of its sacred days. The first and second of this month are kept as New year's days, and have been always solemnized as a great feast since the religious revival, but previous

*) Numbers, XX. 10.

to that, only one New years day was observed by the Bene-Israel. This holiday was called by them Naviacha San, which answers to New Year, though it has three other names, viz יום הזכרון "The Day of Memorial" (Lev. XXIII, 24.), יום התרועה "The Day of blowing the Shofar (Trumpet)" (Numb. XXIX. 1); and יום הדין "The Day of Judgment". During the dark ages, the Bene-Israel knew nothing more than that they were tried on this day by the Judge of the whole earth, and that on the day of Kippur or Atonement, which falls on the tenth of this month, they were either condemned or pardoned.

On the first night of this holiday after service, Kidush (or "Sanctification") is first recited, and before the supper is served, grace is said over apples, dates, pumpkins, honey, fish and sheep's head. On the first and second day of this holyday many Bene-Israel repair to the synagogue for the morning, noon and evening services. They also go to the sea-shore for Tashlich i.e. the ceremony of casting away their sins into the sea, in the afternoon of either the first or the second day.

On the third day of this month, the Bene-Israel observe a fast in memory of Gedaliah whom Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, appointed Governor of the population left in the Holy Land. Gedaliah was, however, killed by Ishmael, the son of Nethania of royal seed, as soon as he aimed at supreme power in Palestine. The Bene-Israel attend their synagogue on this day early in the morning at four o'clock to offer propitiatory prayers to God, as in the preceding month Ellul. The present observance of this fast amongst the Bene-Israel was introduced by David Rahabi.

We have already observed that there is a peculiar notion among the Bene-Israel, that the souls of the departed, visit their habitation on the day known as Ereb Kippur i.e. the Day previous to Atonemetnt Day, and leave on the night of the Simhat Cohen i.e. of the day immediately succeeding the Atonement Day. This notion is, it is believed, based upon the Yom-Kippur prayer for the souls of the departed. The Jews "go a day previous to the Day of Atonement to their burial ground to visit the dead, the object of which is to invoke their intercession for the ensuing day. In passing along from grave to grave, the most pious are deeply affected,

especially entreating their relations and friends to pray for them the next day". *).

On the tenth of this month the Bene-Israel observe the great fast of the Day of Atonement, but on the morning of the previous day, i.e. on the ninth day, after the propitiatory prayers, when the morning service is over, the Bene-Israel recite the prayer of forgiveness, as it is done on the last day of the month of Ellul, and return home, when some of the Bene-Israel perform the ceremony of Kapparoth or atoning sacrifice, in imitation of the Jews. The sacrifice consists of a cock for a male and a hen for a female. A white fowl is preferred to any other, in allusion to the words of the prophet, "Though your sins be as scarlet ,they shall become white as snow", Isa. I. 18. After which they sit to dinner at about 10 a.m. when first of all they offer a dish which contains some pieces of Gharies (cakes of rice flour fried in oil), some pieces of Puries (tarts) made of wheat flour and sugar, or coconut kernel scrapings and jaggery, and some pieces of liver and gizzards, fried in oil, different kinds of fruit, subja and a cup of wine etc. Prayers are first offered over it, and then some wine is poured on the ground as a libation; while the rest is sipped by the adult members of the family. The ingredients in the dish, as well as other sweetmeats made at home, are then distributed among the family. In the afternoon ,they first bathe in hot and then in cold water, which bathing is called Tebilla (purification) when some devout Bene-Israel subject themselves to the whip or twisted cloth correction. Before sunset all of the Bene-Israel, whether male or female, take their supper and dress themselves with white apparel, and repair to the synagogue, which is beautifully lighted. Before the evening service is commenced, all the Law books are taken out of the Ark. Only those persons who promise to offer very large sums of money are allowed to take the scrolls out of the Ark. They take them out and hold them in their hands, standing in front of the Hekal facing the Teba when the Reader (Hazan) formally rescinds the previous vows three times. Then the first man who has taken the Law in his hand recites the following grace :—

*) See page 169 of the work "The British Jews" by the Rev. John Mills.

"Blessed art thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who hast preserved us alive, sustained us and brought us to this season," when every one says "Amen". After which a prayer is offered for the prosperity of the Royal Family, the Viceroy and Governor General of India, and the Governor of Bombay. When this is over, the evening service commences and lasts for three hours, and during that time the confession of sin, which is the most essential and characteristic element in the service of the day, is made, and pardon implored. It must be remarked here that on this day, the Bene-Israel synagogues are more than crowded, as those who are so careless as not even to pay their visit to the synagogue at any other time in the year, are careful to be present on that day. At the end of the service, after the unity of the Godhead has been acknowledged, persons who have paid their redemption money, as directed in Exodus XXX 12. 16, are blessed, when many return home; while a few remain in the synagogue reading "the Crown of the supreme sovereignty" a poem by Rabbi Solomon ben Gabirol, Psalms etc.

The next day early in the morning, i.e. on the morning of the tenth of this month — both males and females again attend the place of worship and remain there till sunset, confessing their sins and imploring pardon from God and praying for the continuance of His mercy and loving kindness. During the morning service and the additional service, the most imposing ceremonies are the confession of sins, called "V i d u y", and the kneeling, prostrating and falling of the whole of the Hebrew nation in the world on their faces and exclaiming with one tremulous voice, "Blessed be the name of the glory of His Kingdom for ever and ever"; when they imagine to hear the ineffable name proceeding from the mouth of the Reader or Minister with sanctity and purity, as in the time of the Holy Temple.

At the time of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the Day of Atonement was a day of great solemnity, the whole nation was fasting and praying; the Holy Temple was attended by Priests who were engaged in their sacred duties and by Levites who were occupied in singing praises to the Almighty. The Day of

Atonement was the only day on which the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies.

The High Priest had to perform very sacred duties on this day. He had to offer the sacrifices as commanded in Lev. XXIII. 23—33., to pray for himself and for his family, as well as for the whole congregation, before the Altar of the Most High. The ceremonies of the day were peculiarly grand, solemn and sacred; and great was the anxiety of the people, who crowded the courts of the temple, to listen with attention to the prayers of the High Priest; and at the conclusion of every prayer, when the most Holy name of the Great God was pronounced by the High Priest, the whole nation fell upon their faces exclaiming the words above-mentioned. And when the comforting word T i t h a r u ("Ye are pure") was heard from the mouth of the High Priest ,every heart rejoiced and was happy. At night the people returned home grateful to the Almighty who had again received them into His favour and pardoned their sins.

At present we are deprived of this glory, for no sacrifice can be offered except at Jerusalem in the Temple which is not in existence.

At nightfall a sound of the Shofar proclaims the termination of the fast, and the conclusion of the day's sacred observances.

As it is customary among the Hebrews to sing the praise of the Lord when the moon renews her crown of glory, the Bene-Israel, like the Jews do so at the conclusion of the Atonement service. But during the time of their ignorance when they knew not the words of praise sung on the occasion, they merely, like dumb persons, who show their intentions by the signs of their hands, stretched forth their hands towards the moon and kissed them;*) and instead of the grace said over fragrant spices, they took the scent of sandal-paste or s u b j a l e a v e s. Such is the true meaning and manner of what the B o m b a y G a z e t t e e r at page 514 vol XVIII states when it says that "Formerly the Bene-Israel on the Atonement day worshipped the moon, kissed their hands and bowed down to it, threw towards it a few grains of rice, some sandal paste or g a n d h and s u b j a leaves, and showed it a silver or gold coin, which was then laid in a box."

As regards the throwing of grains of rice and showing silver

*) Cf. Job. 31, 26—27. (I.O.)

or gold coins to the moon, we can safely say that some ignoramuses might have done so in imitation of local usage, but it cannot be said that it has been practised generally.

The writer in the Bombay Gazetteer further states that the Bene-Israel also used to worship the house-lamp; but if he had borne in mind that a grace is required to be said soon after the lamp is lighted on the termination of every Sabbath and after the conclusion of the Atonement service, he would not have misconstrued the prayer. This does not refer to any worshipping of the lamp, but is an addressing of praise to God, who creates the light of the fire.

On the eleventh day of the month, the Bene-Israel observe Simhat Cohen, a festival, which is called Shila San in their language. On this day alms are given and friends and relations are entertained with feasts.

From the fifteenth of this month the feast of Tabernacles commences ,and lasts for nine days, when the Bene-Israel erect Tabernacles of the green leaves of the coconut tree in the compound of their synagogues and houses in commemoration of the ancient Hebrews having dwelt in booths during their forty years wandering in the wilderness after their release from Egypt. During this long period they had no houses ,they lived in huts made of branches of trees, which could be put up easily and removed easily. The Bene-Israel take their meals in these booths during the week. This holiday is observed as commanded in Lev. XXIII 40—43.

During this holiday the Bene-Israel take in their hands branches of the palms, the myrtle, the wilow of the brook, which are tastefully bound together and a citron, and walk round the Teba or Altar in procession, reciting hymns of praise, and chanting Hoshanna. On the seventh day of this feast falls Hoshanna Rabba or The Great Hoshanna. During the night of this day, people stay up late in the synagogue, and read portions of the Bible. In the morning, during the service, a Scroll of the Law is taken out of the Ark and placed on the Al Memor or Reading Desk when the palm-bearing persons walk in procession round the scroll seven times chanting Hoshanna. After the service is over, the leaves of the willow branches are beaten on the ground. This, it

is said, is a relic of that beautiful ceremony, which was performed in the Holy Temple, when the Hebrews of old with joyful songs strewed the Altar with the willow twigs they had used during the festival.

The eighth day of this festival is a day of holy convocation, when prayers suitable to the occasion are offered to God, imploring Him to send the wind and pour the rain in their due seasons.

The ninth day of this festival is observed as the Rejoicing of the Law, when prayers are offered as on the previous day. But during the night of this festival and the ensuing morning when prayer is over ,the scrolls of the Law are taken out of the Ark and seven circuits are made round the Al Memor or Reading Desk with joyful songs. We are not aware that Mahomedan or Marathi songs are ever sung, or that the women ever join the male company on this or any other occasion, either in dancing or singing, as stated by the Bombay Gazetteer at page 514, vol. XVIII Part I. The statement made by the Gazetteer is totally false, as the Bene-Israel women detest dancing. Some illiterate and ignorant males dance on this occasion, but they are laughed at by the educated.

Heshwan or Marheshwan. This month consists of either twenty-nine or of thirty days, and extends over parts of October and November. In Biblical times this month was called Bul. During this month devout persons observe three fasts, viz:— on the first Monday, Thursday and second Monday. These fasts are instituted in order that the people may atone for any shortcomings in their religious observances during the previous feasts.

Kislev. This month somtimes consists of twenty-nine and somtimes of thirty days, and lasts over parts of November and December. On the twenty fifth of this month falls the feast of Dedication, which was instituted in memory of the purification and Dedication of the Temple, which was polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, about 170 B.C., when Antiochus wanted to uproot the Hebrew religion. This feast lasts for eight days, during which the Bene-Israel synagogues and houses are lighted, and special prayers are offered in grateful acknowledgment of the victory which the Maccabean heroes gained over the Syrian army.

The introduction of this holiday among the Bene-Israel is of a recent date, and it is most probable that the ancestors of the Bene-Israel left Palestine about the time that the event it commemorates occured.

Tebeth. This month has always twenty-nine days, and extends over parts of December and January. On the tenth of this month ,the Bene-Israel observe a fast in memory of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon. They did, however, not observe it until the religious revival by David Rahabi.

Shebath. This month consists of thirty days and extends over parts of January and February. The fifteenth of the month is observed as a minor festival, and is called, "The New year for the Trees". It is supposed that about this day the sap begins to rise in the trees after the Winter. The Bene-Israel observed this day in former times with great pomp as already mentioned in the first chapter of this work; but even now this day is universally observed by them as a holiday.

Adar. This is the twelfth month of the Jewish year, and it always consists of twenty-nine days. It extends over parts of ebruray and March. In a leap year, the second Adar has also twenty-nine days and corresponds with the month of March. On the thirteenth of Adar of the ordinary year, or on the thirteenth of Ve-Adar of the Leap-year, a fast is observed by the Bene-Israel in memory of the fast observed by the Hebrews of Shushan at the command of Queen-Esther, and the fourteenth is observed as a festive day. Shushan Purim, or the second day of the feast of Purim, is not observed as a holiday by the Bene-Israel. We need not enter into any detailed account of this festival, as we have already given it at the beginning of the first chapter of this work. During the reading of the Megilla (Book of Esther) the Bene-Israel show their detestation of Haman's conduct by loudly knocking against the synagogue benches.

Having treated so far of the fasts and feasts of our people occuring during the twelve months of the Jewish year, we shall now give a short summary of the daily religious duties performed by the Bene-Israel, both in times gone by and in later times, after the religious revival.

As it is considered that the soul departs from the body during

sleep and is restored again when we are awakened, it is regarded as indispensably necessary to thank God for it. Consequently the Bene-Israel is expected, when he awakes to say the following :— I acknowledge before thee, the living and everlansting King, that thou hast returned my soul to me in thy great mercy and faithfulness." In this short prayer, the name of the Lord is not used as it would be irreverent to pronounce it before the washing of hands and face. Immediately after, he washes his hands and face and says the following grace :— "Blessed art thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us with thy commandments and commanded us to cleanse our hands." The practice of repeating some words in their vernacular *) acknowledging the kindness of God for his having preserved one's life obtained among the Bene-Israel from very olden times, and though they were ignorant of prescribed prayers, they washed their hands and face immediately after they got up, with the water that was always kept by night near their bed under cover, and they acknowledged the Oneness of God with the words of Keriyat Shema, i.e. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord". This practice was in course of time discontinued, and the grace given above was substituted instead, shortly after the present religious revival. The next duty he has to do is to take a warm bath ,after which he repeats the morning prayers. Some repeat short prayers in Hebrew, some pray in the vernacular, from the translation of the liturgy; while others attend the synagogues. During prayers the Tallith, Tephillin or Phylacteries, and the Sisith, or the fringe, are worn by the Bene-Israel in the same way as the Jews do, the former two vestments by some, while the latter by all the Bene-Israel. The services offered by the Bene-Israel are of the Sephardi Minhag, or the form of prayers according to the custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. Their translation has been made in English by the Rev. D. A. Desola, and was published in 1856. At night when the Bene-Israel goes to bed, he will first acknowledge the unity of the Godhead as stated above.

The Bene-Israel woman, on whom all the culinary duties devolve, commences cooking the meals for the Sabbath at about two in the after-noon on Friday and finishes it before five.

*) What words were used? (I.O.).

The service commences about the setting of the sun on Friday and lasts for an hour only. At the end of the service, the sanctification for the Eve of the Sabbath is pronounced by the Reader on the juice of grapes for the congregation in the synagogue. After it, the Reader tastes the juice and the rest is distributed among the congregation present in the synagogue. Some of the Bene-Israel pronounce the sanctification of the Sabbath at their houses. When this is over, the Sabbath meal which generally consists of fowl, rice, bread, vegetables, fruit, wine, etc., among the well-to-do Bene-Israel; and of mutton, rice, bread, liquor among the middle-class Bene-Israel; and of fish, rice, and bread among the poor class Bene-Israel, is partaken of. Grace is always said before and after meals.

Next morning people go to the synagogue for prayer, which commences at half past six and is continued until half past eight. Few Bene-Israel women attend the synagogue on the Sabbath morning. A large number, however, attend the synagogue on Festivals, especially on New Year's and Atonement days, when they sit in the gallery of the synagogue. After the morning service is over, a Scroll of the Law is taken out of the Ark and a portion is read by or on behalf of 7 persons, while the eighth reads a portion of the prophets, which is called H a f t a r a h . Lastly, the Additional Service commences, and is finished within about three quarters of an hour, when the sanctification of the Sabbath on grape-juice is pronounced by the Reader, who tastes a little of it, after which the rest is distributed among the congregation present in the synagouge. The assembly then breaks up, and its members go home. At about three o'clock, people again go to the synagogue for the afternoon service.

The Saturday evening service is much the same as that on common days, with the addition of some Psalms, and is commenced at sunset. It lasts for an hour, or so. At the end of the service, lamps are lighted in the Synagogues by the S h a m a s h or the beadle. At the time Elijah the Prophet is invoked, a plate containing two glasses of grape juice is placed on the T e b a or Reading Desk, when the Reader holding one of them in his hand repeats a grace on it ,and after tasting a little of it, the rest is distributed among the congregation present in the Synagogue — and

after reciting V e y i t e n l e k h a and H a m a b d i l the assembly breakes up.

The Mishna defined thirty-nine A b o t h or principal occupations which are prohibited on the Sabbath.

Although the Bene-Israel in olden times knew not all these, yet they desisted from ploughing, sowing, digging, cutting down or pruning trees, lopping off branches, smoking, kindling fire etc. They did not drive in carriages nor did they ride on horse-back. In fact, they desisted from every sort of work which would desecrate the Sabbath. They visited each other on that day.

The N e w - M o o n. We shall give a short account of the New-Moon. The first day of every Jewish month is called R o s h H o d e s h, meaning the head of the month, and is generally reckoned as a minor holiday. On the Sabbath preceding the New-Moon, the H a z a n (Reader) repeats during the morning service a special prayer. After this he announces the name of the next month and of the New-Moon day.

As the day among the Hebrews is reckoned from evening to evening, the public service in the synagogue commences in fact on the evening of the last day of the month, and consists of several additions to that of common days. An additional service is also offered to God on the morning of the New-Moon. Besides this, praise is sung to God on account of the moon renewing her crown of glory between the fourth and the fifteenth nights. But those who do not know what the Hebrew religion is, accuse the Bene-Israel of worshipping the moon, by doing which they only betray their own ignorance.

S y n a g o g u e s. We shall now state for the information of our readers, when the several Bene-Israel synagogues and prayer-halls, both at Bombay and elsewhere, were opened for the service of God.

1. The oldest Syngogue of the Bene-Israel, situated in Samuel Street at Bombay, was built in 1796 by the late Samaji Hassaji, and is called "Shaar Harachamim" (Gate of Mercy).

2. The New Synagogue which is situated in the Don Tar 3rd. Row, in Bombay, was built by voluntary contributions raised by people who were dissatisfied with the managers of the Oldest

synagogue. The New Synagogue was dedicated in Sivan 5603 A.M. i.e. 5th June 1844.

3. The Synagogue at Revadanda, a town in the Kolaba Collectorate, was also built by voluntary contributions in about 1846, and it was re-built in 1876 from the accumulation of the Offerings made by the people to the synagogue. Its first establishment is mainly due to the exertions of Hacham Shellomo Salem Shurrabi. We are glad to state that this synagogue is well managed, and credit is due to the congregation at that place, and especially to Mr. Samuel Jacob Dandakar, for the good management exercised by him. Moreover no spirit of party feeling has ever been shewn by the congregation of that place, from the first building of the synagogue up to this date.

4. The Synagogue at Alibag, otherwise called Angria's Kolaba, was built in 1848 by means of voluntary contributions, and was dedicated to the service of God on the first Ellool of that year. But it is a matter of regret that there is dis-union among the Alibag congregation. Hacham Shellomo Salem Shurrabi did his best to effect its establishment and his exertion on that account deserve much praise.

5. The Synagogue at Panwell was also erected by subscriptions on the part of the Bene-Israel and was dedicated on the 17th. May 1849 i.e. on the Feast of Pentecost. Credit is due to the late Hacham Shellomo Salem Shurrabi for its establishment, as he went to Panwell to stir up the people truly to love God. It is said that previous to the building of this synagogue, a prayer hall was opened at first in the house of Mr. Aaron Elijah Nowgawkar and subsequently in that of the late Joseph David Sankar, who was generous enough to give his own house for the erection of the synagogue. But we regret to say that a spirit of jealousy is now and then shown by the people which has given rise to two factions at this place, and although they unite in prayers at the synagogue, they are frequently at feud with each other.

6. The synagogue at Talley Ghosaley, a village in the Konkan, was built in April 1849 at the expense of local contributions. It was burnt down in October 1852, and had therefore to be re-built in 1876. There was complete union among the Bene-Israel of that

place, but many of the congregation having left the place, it is not now in a flourishing condition.

7. Previously to the building of a synagogue at Penn, a Prayer-Hall was opened in the house of Jamedar Isaac Elloji Nagawkar the son of the celebrated ballad-singer among the Bene-Israel, Elloji and subsequently in that of the late Varvatnakar Jamedar. In the meantime one Sutkel Benjamin Kandlekar gave his house for the erection of a synagogue, which was built at the expense of Hannabi widow of the late Mr. Hyam David Divekar and dedicated on 1st. Ellool 5623 or 1863 to the service of God. Like their brethren in Bombay and elsewhere the Bene-Israel at Penn had also at one time shown a spirit of jealousy, and had formed themselves into two factions, but we are glad to say that the two factions had been reconciled long before the synagogue which had been in bad repair, was rebuilt. It was rebuilt by the people themselves and rededicated to the service of God on the 9th. of March 1893.

8. The Synagogue at Poynad a village in the Alibag Collectorate was built about May 1866 by local subscriptions, but it is not in a prosperous condition.

9. The Synagogue at Borlai, a village in Hubshi territory was built at the expense of the late Mr. Shalom Isaac Sogawkar, who also gave some land which yields some income to meet the expenditure of the synagogue. The synagogue was dedicated in May 1869, but these people too have disunion in their midst.

10. A Prayer-Hall was opened in the Don Tar 3rd. Row at Bombay in 1872 in a building called Jamatkhana. The cause of its opening was a dispute which arose in the congregation of the Oldest synagogue, owing to a difference of opinion as to who should be appointed Hazzan in place of its deceased incumbent.

11. The synagogue at Ambepur, a village in the Kolaba Collectorate, was built in or about 1874, partly at the expense of the late Mr. Joseph Solomon Sankar, and partly by means of voluntary contributions, but it fell down owing to its being a daub work, plastered with Chunam, and had to be rebuilt in January 1884 by voluntary contribution. There is, it is said, disunion

among these people, and hence the synagogue is not in prosperous condition.

12. The synagogue at Thana was built at a cost of Rs.8039, raised by voluntary subscriptions and donations from the Bene-Israel community at large, and was dedicated for the service of God on the 30th. December 1879 and is named Shaar Hashamayim i.e. "The gate of Heaven". We are glad to mention here that some of the Bene-Israel showed great zeal and liberality in subscribing towards the erection of this Building.

13. A Synagogue was built at Ashtumi by voluntary local contributions, and was dedicated to the service of God in May 1882, on the Feast of Pentecost, and goes by the name of Bethel, i.e. "The house of God."

14. At Poona there were first two prayer-halls belonging to the Bene-Israel, of which one was opened, about 20 years ago, while the other was opened about 16 years ago, owing to dissensions amongst them.

15. A Synagogue at Karrachee was built at the expense of Mr. Shalom David Omerdekar, and was dedicated to the service of God in May 1893, but, there is disunion among this community also.

16. A Synagogue in connection with the Israelite school was opened on the first day of Tishri 5649 A.M. (5th. September 1888) in Bombay.

The establishment of this synagogue pursued the following objects :

1. To find opportunities for preparing the rising generation of the community to pray in intelligible Hebrew, so as to enable them to recite their prayers in the synagogue, and to lead them to the path of righteousness and devotion by means of religious education.

2. To introduce the practice of delivering sermons in our own vernacular in the Synagogue.

3. To make such arrangements as will enable us to substitute for the present practice of mumbling through in an indistinct, discordant and formal manner, prayers and songs which grate so very unpleasantly on the ear, a mode of repeating them, which will

insure harmony ,order and solemnity during the whole service and will not only inspire feelings of devotion, but will cause people to be thoroughly absorbed in the contemplation of God.

4. To enable us to print and publish religious books and tracts.

5. Lastly the income of this synagogue together with any assistance that may be obtained from outside will be appropriated towards making due provision for the above objects and for imparting secular and religious education to the children of the community as well as teaching them handicrafts, which will secure to them an honest, respectable and independent living, without any interference with their religious observances, especially the Sabbath; and to establish, if possible, workshops for our own people. If the proposed worship proves to be a success, it will be improved by degrees and it will then help us to impart instruction to the children of our community and also to accomplish the objects mentioned above.

But this requires unity on the part of the people, without which the objects indicated above cannot be accomplished. We therefore exhort those who wish for the improvement of their children to join the school synagogue, and to send them to the Israelite School. During the past century and a half, those who came later than we did to Bombay, have risen to power and affluence, and it is advisable that we should inquire into the causes of our own backwardness. The school synagogue is likely to prove beneficial to the community in proportion as the animosity which has increased owing to party feeling among our people shall become extinct, and mutual concord and harmony shall prevail throughout the community.

The prevalence of a spirit of faction and disunion among almost all the various portions of the Bene-Israel community both at Bombay and elsewhere is one of the most obvious of the causes that have tended to retard all progress in our midst, and which have prevented the rise of the community to a high social elevation in point of education, moral training and affluence. The sentiment of Philosophers and poets that "real ignorance is preferable to a little learning" is fully applicable to the Bene-Israel, for, so long as they were in a state of ignorance they generally followed one leader, acted in obedience to his guidance, and there was no discord

and disunion in their ranks; but it is much to be regretted that as soon as they acquired a little amount of knowledge, they began to think themselves to be all-wise, and every one tried to make things take their course according to his own private will and pleasure. In short what Pope says in the following passage is fully applicable to them :

A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;
Their shallow draughts intoxicate the brain;
And drinking largely, sobers us again.

This deplorable state of affairs among the Bene-Israel is the result of their having no spiritual guide, Rabbi, or Minister who can preach them their religion, deliver sermons, restore peace amongst them, preach good will and unity to all parites, urge mutual concessions, promote a spirit of love, concord and brotherhood, dispel ignorance, rekindle religious sentiments by a true Jewish education, initiate a variety of improvements, remove all kinds of abuses, render worship more dignified and suited to its purpose by its being conducted with the order and reverence which may command respect, prevent disunion and divisions among them, teach them the ordinances of faith, the precepts of civil life, their duty to their neighbour and to their fatherland which is so dear to them, their duty to their sovereign and respect due to its laws, teach them also the rules and precepts which render life happy below, and promise undying happiness in the world to come. In fact from his mouth must flow words of advice, admonition, reproof, warning, words of hope, comfort and promise. And unless the Bene-Israel have a Rabbi, or Minister of such a character, their present deplorable condition will never be improved. Moreover they have no temporal guide who can officially represent them in their claims in matters pertaining to their civil and political rights, or labour at removing the barriers of the disqualification encircling them.

CHAPTER IX

The Bene-Israel As Gallant And Faithful Soldiers

We shall now deal with the character of the Bene-Israel as soldiers, a department of usefulness to the British Empire in which the Bene-Israel have especially signalized themselves in the past and in which capacity they have equalled in military ardour and faithfulness their coreligionists in other parts of the world.

It is a well-known fact that bravery, courage, nobility and majesty of feature are characteristics of Hebrews of all the parts of the globe, in spite of manifold differences of costume and custom. Israelites have, in fact, inherited the soldierlike qualities they possess from the royal race from which they are descended. They are therefore, ill-accustomed to slavery, and in their looks we discover the recollection and consciousness of great destinies. While some of them are characterised by apparent humiliation of countenance and abasement of condition, yet the traits already spoken of, are very conspicuously to be seen in them at all times and places. That courage has been a most distinctive mark of the Hebrew race, and that to this quality alone their very survival is to be attributed, may very readily be accounted for by the fact that Israelites have ever been animated by the spirit of the proverb, that says, "Nobility imposes great obligations". The recollection of the heroic deeds of their ancestors, the memory of their undaunted valour on fields of battle, and of other qualities of a like nature, have constituted a potent cause to which is to be ascribed the production of many gallant soldiers in the ranks of the sons of Israel that have rushed forth to battle under furious charges of musketry and cannon, and have clearly shewn themselves by their firmness, resolution, faithfulness and other martial qualities to be descendants of a mighty

race of warriors, famous in times of remote antiquity, — one which defeated most powerful armies under most trying circumstances in the holy land of Israel. Indeed, Israelitish soldiers of this stamp are still to be found in the armies of England, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Austria, Prussia, Russia, India and many other countries.

The earliest mention of the Bene-Israel serving as soldiers is in the case of two members of the Churrikar family, who were appointed Commodores of his navy by the Abyssinian ruler of Janjira, and who had to fight a battle with the soldiers of the Angria. In this engagement they came within the clutches of the Arab soldiers of the Angria, who insisted that they should give up their arms and enter the ranks of their chieftain. It is said that when they refused to turn traitors, they were massacred in cold blood. Being thoroughly convinced of their faithfulness and bravery, the Angria appointed two of the Bene-Israel, Samuel or Samaji and Abraham or Abaji, from the Churrikar family to the command of his navy. In token of faithful services rendered to the Government of Angria, the members of the Churrikar family received special honours from the members of the Bene-Israel community, and were also granted some land in Inam, which is still enjoyed by their descendants. A copy of the Sanad given to this family by the Angria is translated and given in chapter III of this work.

Besides the Churrikars, there were others who had risen to eminence in the time of the Peshwas and the Angrias; but as no records of their services can be traced at such a distant period, we were unable to give an account of these with any certainty. It is, however, said that the ancestors of the Waskar and Mullekar families were successively appointed officers in charge of Avchitgad Fort, situated near Roha, by the Peshwas. The ancestors of the Mullekar family had by their loyal and faithful services, renderd to the Government of the Peshwas, secured the office of Kotawal i.e. Commissary. The members of this family are called "Kotawla Mullekars" even now, on account of this fact. The ancestors of the Gadkar family was also nominated commandant of the Ságadgud Fort in Alibag by the Angria. His family, therefore, obtained the surname of the Gadkar, otherwise

the family would have been known as Wadhowkars. Like the ancestors of the Mullekars and Gadkars ,the ancestors of the Bhorupkar family is said to have been in charge of the Bhorup Fort situated in the Pant Sachew territory. Besides these, there were several other Bene-Israel, such as the Ashtamkars, the Kolabkars, the Penkars, the Shirgawkars, the Nagawkars, Thulkars, Warwatnekars, etc., who had secured the offices of Mheters, i.e. village officers, but who did not rise to great position and affluence in consequence of the religion professed by Bene-Israel not allowing them to assimilate with the natives of India, nor was there any body who could bespeak favour on their behalf from the Native Princes. The ancestors of the Bene-Israel, moreover, were perfectly indifferent towards this matter, their whole and sole care being about the preservation of their lives, property and religion.

But when the Island of Bombay came into the possession of the Honourable East India Company, many of the Bene-Israel gradually came to the island expecting to get more religious liberty there than anywhere in the native states. They did not think of coming to Bombay so long as it was in the possession of the Portuguese, being afraid lest they might share the same fate with many of those Indian races who were forced to embrace Christianity against their will. The British Government adopted the wise policy of religious toleration, and freedom of conscience. The English Government pursued, and have been since pursuing, this policy very strictly, and it was owing to its excessive exercise that the importation of the first Missionaries in Calcutta and Bombay was at first strictly forbidden. Nay, some time after this event when the American Missionaries, instead of venturing to do it themselves, sent three of their Hebrew teachers (Samuel Jacob Kehimkar, Etba Awaskar and Benjamin Waskar) to circulate Biblical and religious tracts among the people below the Ghats at a time when Poona was newly taken in 1818, Captain Robertson, then the Collector of Poona, forbade them to circulate the tracts and books, and made them prisoners. After three days they were deprived of their books and tracts, and were transported under escort of a guard beyond the Compolee Ghat.

The matter was brought to the notice of the Honourable Mounstuart Elphinstone by the Revs. Gordon Hall, Graves and Nichol, but it was decided that the Collector was justified in doing so, as people would break out in rebellion, thinking that their country was taken by the foreigners and that they were to be made apostates to their own religion.

It will thus be seen that it was religious toleration which attracted the attention of the Bene-Israel to the British Raj, and brought them to Bombay. After coming to this city, many of the young Bene-Israel entered into the ranks of the Company's service ,and with great rapidity secured all the posts in the Military service, that were opened to natives ,for themselves, by their bravery, loyalty and faithfulness. We shall now give a short account of the military careers of some of them.

Issaji Hassaji or Isaac Ezekiel Divekar was, it appears, enlisted in about 1760. From the commission granted to him by William Hornby president of and for all affairs of the Honourable United Company of Merchants of England, trading to the East Indies on the Coast of India, Persia and Arabia, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Castle and Island of Bombay, we gather that he was appointed Jemedar of a Company in the second Battalion on the 13th December 1771. He was promoted to the rank of Subedar on the 11th. December 1775, and subsequently to that of Subedar Commandant in the 13th. Battalion.

Sillamon or Solomon Hassaji Divekar was also enlisted in about 1760. He was promoted to the rank of Subedar of a Company in the Sixth Battalion from the 18th. May 1775, and subsequently to that of Native Commandant.

Samaji or Samuel Hassaji Divekar was enlisted at the same time as the other two gentlemen. He was made a Jemedar of a Company in the 6th. Battalion on 2nd. July 1775, and was subsequently promoted to the rank of Subedar and Subedar Commandant. He was in the second Mysore War, under General Mathews and was taken prisoner and kept as such for some time before he was released. He built the Oldest Synagogue in Bombay after his release. The records that would throw light on

the war services of this able officer can nowhere be traced, with the exception of a warrant issued under date 4th. July 1791 at Tellicherry by Major General Abercromby, Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's and the Honourable Company's forces on the coast of Malabar, appointing him President of a General Court-martial.

Ellojee or Elijah Hassaji Divekar was enlisted in about 1760, and was appointed Jemedar in the 5th. Battalion on the 12th. October 1775.

David Hassaji Divekar was also enlisted in about 1760, and was raised to the rank of a Subedar in the seventh Battalion on 1st. September 1781.

We do not possess any more information about these five officers who were all brothers, and whose account we have given above, except that they received Jemedars' and Subedars' commissions from Governor Hornby, and that almost all of them were present in the war against Tippoo, during which they served the East India Company very zealously and faithfully. It is said that there were several other Bene-Israel officers such as Subedar Essoobjee Jhiratkar, Subedars Tanajee and Bappuji Wargharkar, Subedar Sillamon Dandgoolkar, etc., in the Mysore war, but, with the exception of a few, all of them fell in the war. The records of their military career are not now available as it is almost a century since they lived.

It is said that Jemadar Gowrojee Dhumbajee Oomerdekar, one of the Bene-Israel Officers was appointed by an order of the Government, which had perfect confidence in his loyalty and ability, an officer in charge of the Raigud Fort, at a very critical juncture, when the Maratha power was still ruling in India. This Fort is famous for the coronation of King Shivajee in 1674.

Subedar Sillamon Essoobjee Oomerdekar of the 17th. Regiment N. I., was in charge of the Kurnalla Fort, situated between Penn and Panwell.

One, Kamerlakar, Subedar of the 5th. Regiment Native Infantry, was in charge of the Chakan Fort, situated in the Deccan.

Jemedar Issajee Zavlikar, of the 16th. Regiment Native Infantry, was in charge of the Junnair Fort situated in the Deccan, and many other Bene-Israel officers were in charge of several other forts, but we are not aware of their names. We know from their descendants that they distinguished themselves in the service of the East India Company during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Subedar Major Hassaji Dawoodjee Divekar appears to have been enlisted in 1795 in the Battalion of Pioneers, where he was made Jemedar on the 24th. May 1810 by order of the Honourable Jonathan Duncan. He was raised to the rank of a Subedar on 3rd. August 1812 and subsequently to that of Subedar Major. He retired from the service about 1829, and the following complimentary Regimental order was issued on the eve of his retirement by Captain J. Hancock Commanding the Battalion of Pioneers dated camp Nimbolie 31st. December 1828:—Hassajee Dawoodjee Subedar-Major, Battalion of Pioneers, after a period of 33 years, service is about to leave the Battalion with a view of appearing before the different Boards. In justice to his (the Subedar's) desires, and the commanding officer's own feelings, the commanding officer cannot allow the Subedar-Major to quit the Battalion without expressing his most unqualified approbation of his conduct generally during the time that the Subedar Major has been under the Commanding Officer's own immediate command. He, the Subedar Major, has always been an active, zealous and efficient officer and the commanding officer is led to hope that he (Subedar Major) is soon to receive the reward which the Honourable Company's service holds out to its old, faithful and meritorious native officers.

As a mark of respect to the Subedar Major, the commanding officer directs this order to be read and fully explained to the Battalion at the Muster Parade this morning."

Subedar Major Bhowjee Tulkar of the 15th. Regiment, Bombay Native Infantry enlisted on 31st. August 1796. He was promoted to the rank of Jemedar on the 7th June 1801, and was made a Subedar on 31st. August 1808. He was subsequently

made Subedar Major. He was present in the fourth Mysore War, and at the battle of Poona. He was a man of handsome build and of a prepossessing aspect. He was in character bold, courageous and warlike.

Subedar Samuel Ezekiel Khurrilkar was enlisted in the 16th Regiment Native Infantry before 1790, and was appointed Subedar by order of the Honourable Jonathan Duncan from 21st. May 1802. He had a bronze medal bearing date the 4th. May 1799 with a figure of a British Lion subduing the Indian Tiger, which refers to Tippoo and on its reverse, the entry of British army into Seringapatan, with Persian inscription and Mahomedan date 27th. Zilkad A. H. 1213.

Sirdar Bahadur Sillamon Abajee Waskar belonged to the 3rd. Regiment Bombay Native Light Infantry. He was enlisted on the 1st. January 1809 and was raised to the rank of a Jemedar on the 20th. November 1820. He was promoted to the rank of Subedar on the 22nd. November 1825. He was made Subedar Major on the 1st. January 1837 and Bahadur on the 23rd. February 1843 and Sirdar Bahadur 1st class on 16th November 1848. He was present at the battles of Poona, Rusood, Khur, Mooltan, Kittoor and Gujurat. We proceed to give one or two extracts that throw light on the military talents and character of this brave warrior and Sirdar Bahadur. Colonel J. D. Hallett, commanding the 3rd. Regiment N.L.I. on the 10th. March 1846, says about him "He has served 40 years and I have known him as a Native officer for the last 23 years. His conduct during this whole period has almost been unexceptionable, his services have been held in high esteem by every commanding officer, and he has commanded the respect and good will of the officers and men to an unusual degree. He is eminently qualified for any command or situation of trust." The following is also a copy of the certificate granted to him by Lieutenant-Colonel E. W. Jones, commanding 13th. Regiment Native Infantry on the 14th. March 1846. "Bahadur Sillemen Abajee, Subedar Major of the 3rd. Regiment, Native Infantry has served the Honourable East India Company since 1809, a period of 37 years, 25 of which as a Native commanding officer. I have known him for 27 years, during nine of which I was com-

manding the Regiment; and in granting this testimonial find myself at a loss for terms sufficiently forcible to express my estimation of his character, towards superiors respectful, without a particle of sycophancy, kind, firm, impartial with inferiors. He has secured the respect of all, while untiring zeal and great ability displayed in the performance of duty was the admiration of his commanding officers. He has seen a great deal of active service, and is worthy of any mark of approbation Government might deem fit to bestow." He has secured several medals and clasps, also a first class order of British India.

Subedar Daniel Khurrilkar was also enlisted in the 16th. Regiment Native Infantry, but we are not aware of the date of his enlistment. From the warrants that are in possession of his descendants, it appears that he was appointed Jemedar by order of His Excellency Lieutenant-General Sir C. Colville, G. C. B., from the 20th. February 1822, and was promoted to the rank of a Subedar by order of the Honourable Major-General Sir John Malcolm G.C.B., from the 20th. December 1827. We are not in possession of his war services, but the following letter is still in possession of the widow of his son :

To,

Colonel B. Kennett,
Commonding Giucwar Subsidiary Force,
Baroda.

Sir,

I feel it a duty incumbent on me to request the favour of your bringing to the notice of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and Government the meritorious and gallant conduct manifested by Subedar Daniel Israel of the 16th. Regiment N. I. and the small Detachment under his command (40) rank and file in a warmly contested engagement with 400 Bheels which were opposed against him on the 1st. Instant between Wassud and Arras on his route to Ammedabad with 40 carts of opium.

The advantages resulting from the zealuos exertions of Subedar Danieljee Israel on this occasion having so completely defeated

the enemy and killed and wounded several without any loss on our side, cannot in my opinion be too highly estimated.

I have the honour to be etc.,

(Sd.) C. Payne,

Major in charge 16th Regiment Native Infantry.

Baroda, 17th. April, 1830.

The above officer was afterwards presented with an unusually large-sized gold medal which is still in possession of the widow of his son. The following inscription is engraved on it :—

"Presented by Government to Subedar Danieljee Israel of the 16th. Regiment Native Infantry for his gallant conduct when in command of a Detachment on the 1st April 1830 in protecting valuable Public property from being plundered by a band of 400 Bheels".

Subedar Major and Bahadur Samajee Bapujee Bhorupkar entered the ranks of the 4th. Bombay Rifles on the 2nd. February 1811. He was promoted to the rank of a Jemedar on 9th. January 1828 and was appointed Native Adjutant from the same date. He was promoted to the rank of Subedar from the 28th. December 1833 — appointed Subedar Major from the 1st January 1839 — admitted to the 2nd. class Ordoer of British India with the title of Bahadur from the 24th. March 1841, and retired from service on 3rd. February 1847. According to Lieutenant-Colonel D. Forbes, "He has borne a most unexceptionable and faultless character throughout the whole of his long and meritorius career and is highly deserving of every mark of favour. He performed the duties of Native Adjutant for six years and a half with much credit to himself and good to the Regiment". In 1813 he served with the Poona Brigade under Colonel Cooke, in 1814 he was in Katyawar and on the banks of the Runn against the Waghurs. In 1815 in Gujirat, at Bhuji, in Katyawar and Oookamundul; was present at the capture of the Forts of Anjar, Kunkote, Dhingkee and Jonkee. In 1816 he was at Jamnuggur and Dwarka, and at the taking of Deesa, Palampur, Veerumpur and Kurrunja. In 1817—18 he served in the whole of the campaign in Malwa in pursuit of Holkar. In 1819 he was at the capture of the Forts of Newtee and Raree in the southern Konkan. From 1821—27 he was employed on various field

services in Gujurat at the taking of the Fort Limbuj, and at Dongerpur and subsequently in the Southern Konkan on several occasions. We quote an extract from Regimental orders by Lieutenant-Colonel C. Crawley dated Baroda 11th. July 1845 — "The Government of India having appointed Subedar Major S a m a j e e B a p u j e e 4th. Regiment Native Infantry or Rifle Corps to be a Subedar Bahadur of the 2nd Class, Lieutenant Colonel C r a w l e y cannot refrain from congratulating the Subedar as well as the Regiment on such a proud honour being conferred on this Native Officer, who has performed such a long and faithful service to the Government and whose character has at all times called forth the esteem and respect of all acquainted with him".

We also quote another extract from Brigade orders by Brigadier C. P a y n e Commanding at Baroda dated 3rd. November 1845. ——"Brigadier Payne having received instructions from Division Head Quarters to take upon himself the gratifying task of investing an old and gallant Native officer of the 4th. Rifles with the star of the 2nd. class of the order of British India, the Brigade will parade in full dress this afternoon at half past five o'clock for the purpose of witnessing the presentation of the decoration of Subedar Major S a m a j e e B a p u j e e, Bahadur of the above corps.

The troops will be drawn up in line on the General Parade ground in the following order: —

Artillery without guns on the right.

2nd. Grenadier Regiment Native Infantry.

4th Regiment N. I. or Rifle Corps.

At the same time the following order will be read and explained to the Brigade.: —

The Brigadier experiences the highest gratification in being this day made the medium of conveying to Subedar-Major S a m a j e e B a p u j e e "Bahadur" the decoration bestowed upon him by the British Government as a testimonial of its appreciation of his long and valuable services."

Sirdar Bahadur M o o s a j e e B a l l a j e e O o m e r d e k a r was the next famous Bene-Israel Officer. He was enlisted in the 19th. Regiment N. I. on the 16th. March 1818. He was made Jemedar on the 9th. January 1827, and a Subedar on the 23rd. December 1829.

According to the officer then in command of the 19th. Regiment, he was recommended to fill the situation of Subedar Major on account of his superior intelligence and knowledge in every department connected with his duties as a Native officer. He possessed, to quote the same Military officer, "such abilities as are rarely if ever to be met with in a Native. He was extremely zealous and had studied and made himself acquainted with every branch of duties of his profession..... was very deserving of any distinction which Government could confer." He was afterwards appointed Native Commandant of the Tanna local corps.

According to Mr. J. S. Law, Collector and Magistrate of Tanna 1849, "he was a most intelligent, zealous and active native officer who always afforded him perfect satisfaction." We shall now quote an extract from Regimental orders by Captain Curtis of the Ghaut Local Corps dated 26th. November 1845. :—

"The commandant requests the highly respected officer Subedar Major Moosajee Ballajee, Native Commandant, to accept his thanks for the very efficient manner in which he has carried out his wishes, and attended to the subordinate duties connected with the command. The Commandant has always had the greatest confidence in the Subedar Major's zeal and exertions, and parts with him with those feelings of attachment which mutual respect and confidence at all times inspire. It would be needless to advert to the high qualities as a Regimental officer which the Subedar Major is known throughout this Army to possess, were it not that the Commandant is anxious to record that during the period of his control, all duties connected with drill and preparing men for service were conducted by the Subedar Major entirely to his satisfaction".

Before we conclude our account of the Military career of this officer, we shall quote the opinion of Major-General Stalker Commanding the Expeditionary Force going to Persia in 1856, about him :— "I have known Subedar Major Bahadur Mussajee Ballajee, late of the 19th. Regiment N. I. and Tanna Police for the period of 30 years. He served in the 19th Regiment with me for a period of 22 years. He had rapid promotion in consequence of his first rate qualities in the different grades. From

Junior Subedar, he was made Subedar Major whilst I commanded the 19th. Regiment. He is the best, smartest and most intelligent Native officer I have ever met, good on field service, and to be trusted on any important duty requiring tact, firmness, ability and intelligence. Cool under fire etc., I have often seen him command the Regiment on Parade; in fact I found him a Native Officer equal to any duty that could be required of him".

Sirdar Bahadur Solomon Ballajee Jahiratkar was enlisted as a recruit-boy in the 14th. Regiment Bombay Native Infantry, in 1818; was promoted to the rank of Jemedar by order of Sir James Rivett Carnac Baronet from the 10th. January 1839; Subedar, by order of Sir George Arthur Bart, from 1st. January 1843; Subedar Major, by order of the Right Honourable John Lord Elphinstone, from 1st January 1856. He served the British Government for 43 years and four months. One remarkable feature in his military career is worth noticing. He served as a Native Adjutant for about 4 or five years while he was yet a Subedar. He rendered long and faithful service and proved to be of great assistance during the time of the Mutiny 1857—58; for though the late disbanded 21st. Regiment N. I. was stationed at Kurrachee, there was not the least sympton of dissatisfaction in the ranks of the soldiers under him. He was present at the siege of Mahadewghur in 1832, and in the Field service at Kolapoor in 1836. He was also present at the operations of Dwarka and Burda Hills against the Waghers 1859—60. He received first and second class stars of the order of British India. General G. S Montgomery, C. S. I., who was in command of the Regiment for several years and his predecessors entertained a very high opinion of him.

Sirdar Bahadur Haskeljee Issajee Zavlikar belonged to the 3rd Regiment N.L.I. He enlisted in about 1826 and served upwards of 42 years rising through all the Regimental staff appointments to the high position of Sirdar Bahadur. He was present at the battles of Multan, Punjab and Afghanistan. During the period of his service, according to Major Bowen commanding the 3rd. Regiment N. L. I., "he evinced such zeal, energy and capacity as to calll from every officer he served under, the highest

testimonials, many of which have been published in Regimental Orders. During that time the careful, loyal attention he devoted to his duties, and the excellent example he set to men, had been of great value to the Regiment, especially at the commencement of the Abysinian Campaign, where the cheerful spirit with which the sepoys did the hard work required of them at Zoolla and Koomaytie under very trying circumstances was remarkable". On the recommendation of his commanding officer he received the star of the Order of British India, first class, on account of his long arduous and loyal services, as also medals and clasps for several works. He displayed ,according to Colonel B i r d w o o d, who was commanding of his Regiment, untiring zeal and energy during his service.

We shall close an account of his career by giving an extract from a letter written from Clenburn House, Bideford, North Devon, England, by Colonel Birdwood some years after his retirement from service. "Mrs. Birdwood and myself were quite pleased and thankful yesterday morning to learn from a letter received from Colonel K i r b y, the Adjutant General, that Lord N a p i e r had selected you for a Bahadoorship. May our heavenly Father long preserve you to enjoy the honour you have so well earned, my old friend, and I earnestly pray God that you may be led by His spirit to lay hold of Eternal life. We shall be always glad to hear from you."

Subedar-Major and Sirdar Bahadoor H a s k e l B a p u j e e M a l e k a r entered the ranks on the 11th. February 1834 in the 12th. Regiment Native Infantry; he was made Jemedar from 1st January 1851; Subedar from 1st January 1855; Subedar-Major from 1st. January 1861, and Bahadoor, with second class order of British India, from 16th. February 1865. He was promoted to the rank of Sirdar Bahadur, with first class order of British India, from 5th June 1868. He was a smart and intelligent officer, and displayed his valour and military skill in various battles and sieges. He was present at the battles of Meanee and Hyderabad in the Scinde Campaign (medal), and at the action of Jeerun; at the siege and Defence of Neemuch 1857, at the Siege and Capture of Kotah, at the battle of Bunas (medal and clasp), and at the action of Seekar

in Rajputana. He was presented in 1862 with a gold watch and a gold chain by Lieutenant-Colonel J. H o l m e s, C.B., and the officers of Her Majesty's 12th. Regiment, Bombay Native Infantry, in token of their admiration of his faithful and gallant services during a long and meritorious career. Colonel, now General Sir E. L. R u s s e l, while bringing to the notice of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, the exemplary and meritorious conduct of this higly deserving Native officer, observes :—

"At the Action of Jeerun, when Captain N. J. S o p p i t t was severely wounded, Subedar Haskeljee took command of the detachment, and succeeded in bringing Captain Soppitt off the field, and thus preventing him from falling into the hands of the enemy. In performing this duty several men of the detachment were wounded."

"During the Mutiny he was unflinching in loyalty and at all times brought reports of any irregular proceedings. The Detachment of the Regiment which was sent to Neemuch, after the Mutiny of the Bengal troops at that station, was composed principally of Hindoostani men. Through the judicious advice and personal influence of Subedar Haskeljee, these two companies were kept loyal, and did good service to the state at the siege of that Fort by the rebels. The Detachment was very favourably mentioned, and rewarded by 12 month's batta".

Captain Soppitt says of Subedar Haskeljee :—
"This meritorious native officer was, by his intelligence and unwearied zeal, of the greatest assistance to me, from the time we left Dessa in May 1857 up to when, from being disabled by wounds, I was obliged to give over the command of the Detachment to Subedar Haskeljee; and I feel that it is but an act of common justice to him as well as a source of the highest satisfaction to myself to state, that, to his example and the beneficial influence he has exerted among the men, is to be attributed, in a great measure, the steadiness and loyalty of the Detachment, whether in field or quarters; and that too rendered in unusually trying circumstances."

At his decoration with the star of the second class order of British India, on the 29th. November 1865, Sir C. S t a v e l y having drawn up the Regiment forming three sides of a square, called Subedar-Major to the front, and in the presence of all, recapi-

PARIS

tulated his past distinguished services to the British Government; then dismounting from his horse he invested the Subedar-Major with the Order and shook hands with him, wishing that he would live long to enjoy the well-merited honour.

He died on the 14th. February 1878, while in service. We quote the order issued after his death by Colonel G. F. Hogg, C.B.:—

"It is with great regret the commandant announces to the Regiment the death of its worthy and highly esteemed Subedar-Major, Haskeljee, Sirdar Bahadur, after a long and faithful service of nearly fifty years, filling in turn almost every office in the 12th. Regiment, and throughout that time, without a fault ,he has earned the respect and warm regard of every one in the Corps.

"When on field service in Scinde his conduct met with the approval of his officers.

"When Mutiny raged throughout India, his loyalty, his superior intelligence, and his tact were especially remarkable, and met with recognition by his superiors; and when serving in cantonment during peace-time his constant, patient and un-flagging attention to his duties has been most beneficial to the Regiment, has met with repeated acknowledgment from all above him.

"Receiving well-merited praise from every successive Commanding officer, wearing the 1st. class of the Order of British India, as the highest marks of approval of his character and conduct by the Government, he has been through life an example of a good and loyal soldier, and now that he is dead, no greater mention to an honourable career can be wished than that every man connected with his Regiment should strive to emulate to the good deeds of which all his comrades must ever feel proud.

"As a mark of respect to this most faithful servant of Her Majesty the Empress of India, the Commandant directs that when the corpse is carried across the parade ground, the whole Regiment shall salute with presented arms.

Agreeably with the above, the Regiment will parade in Review order this afternoon at 4 O'clock, first bugle at 3-30 p.m. Mounted officers will wear a black band on the left arm above the elbow."

A charitable fund has been raised in memory of this gallant and faithful officer by the Officers of his Regiment.

Sirdar Bahadur Solomon Daniel Ghosalkar belonged to the 25th. Regiment Bombay Native Light Infantry. He entered the Military service about sixty-nine years ago. He was promoted from the lowest to the highest rank of Sirdar Bahadur in this Regiment on account of the gallant and faithful services he rendered to the British Government. He was in the Scinde Campaign of 1843-45, and obtained a medal. He was present in the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, at the suppression of the Mutiny of the Hyderabad Contingent cavalry at Aurangabad, Relief of Mhow, Siege and capture of the Fort of Dhar, operations near Mundesore, Battle and capture of Gurrarea, Siege and storming of the Fort of Chanderee, Battle of Betwa, Siege and storming of Jhansi, Action of Koonch, storm and capture of Loharee, Actions in the Jumna, Capture of Calpi, Actions of Morar and Kotah-ke-Serai, Capture of Gwailor, and several minor affairs with rebels under Mansing and Tantia Topee (medal and clasp). The next Campaign in which he was employed was the Abyssinian Expedition of 1867-68 (medal). He had obtained 1st. Class star of the Order of British India. Full confidence was placed in him by the European officers of his Regiment during his life-time, and especially during the Indian Mutniy of 1857-58. He was a general favourite with European officers ,and all the men of his Regiment felt great regard for him.

He died of Cholera at Dhulia on the 14th. October 1869 and a monument has been erected by the European officers of his Regiment at their own expenses in honour of this gentleman. The inscription on the monument runs as follows :—

"Erected to the memory of Subedar-Major Sillamonjee Israel, Sirdar Bahadur, Her Majesty's 25th. Regiment N. L. I., who died of Cholera at Dhulia on the 14th. October 1869. This tablet is erected by the officers of the Regiment in token of the deceased's gallant and meritorious service to the state, covering a period of nearly half a century. Age 65 years."

Sirdar Bahadur Solomon Elijah Wakrulkar enlisted in the 19th. Regiment N.I. on the 25th. September 1838. He was promoted to the rank of a Jemedar 1st January 1853, was made Subedar on 22nd. January 1858, was raised to the rank of Subedar-Major 1st. January 1872, and was invested with the 1st.

and 2nd. Class Order of British India with a title of Bahadur and Sirdar-Bahadur, the latter from the 2nd. December 1877. We give a copy of the complimentary order issued by Colonel W. Creagh about the time of his retirement from service dated Jacobabad 23rd. December 1878. :—

"The Commanding Officer cannot allow Subedar-Major and Sirdar-Bahadur Solomon Elijah to leave the Regiment in which he has held the onerous and responsible position of Subedar-Major for so many years, without placing on Regimental record the high sense he entertains of his worth in every respect. Throughout his long and honourable career of upwards of 40 years, he has borne the character not only of a good and loyal soldier but also of a most conscientious and trustworthy Native Officer, and his example may be followed with advantage by every class in the Regiment. He bears on his breast the honourable distinction of three medals, the first gained as far back as the year 39 when he took part with the Regiment in Afganistan Campaign, including the Capture of Ghanzee and occupation of Cabul. The second for the Punjaub Campaign, in which he was present at the Siege and storming of Multan, the Battle of Guzerat and eventual march to the mouth of the Khyber Pass ;and lately in Central India Campaign of 1858, where he was engaged most actively. He has done what but few can boast of having done—marched up and down both banks of the Iundus from Karrachee to Cabul and Attock in different Campaigns. For these distinguished services he has attained the highest mark of approbation that the Government of India can bestow on a Native Officer, — that of "Sirdar Bahadur," carrying as it does an addition to his pension of Rs.60 per mensem ,and no one ever deserved such an honour more than this good and worthy officer.

The Commanding Officer now wishes him every happiness during the remainder of his days, a wish that he is joined in by all the officers of the Regiment and hopes that he may long live to enjoy the pension he so deservedly gained."

Sirdar Bahadur S a m u e l Z a w l i k a r of the 3rd. Bombay Native Light Infantry also distinguished himself as a soldier and a Native Commissioned Officer. He enlisted in the ranks on the 4th. April 1840. He was promoted to the rank of Jemedar

1st. January 1855, appointed Native Adjutant 19th. March 1855, promoted to the rank of Subedar 1st. February 1862, and to that of Subedar-Major 12th. May 1869. He was admitted to the 2nd. class Order of British India 10th. December 1869, and to the 1st. class Order January 1877. He served with the Bombay Column of the army of Punjab in 1848 and 1849, and was present at the storming of Mundee Avah at Mooltan on the 27th. December 1848. He was with the reserve Brigade at the attack of the City of Mooltan on the 2nd. January 1849. He was present during the siege of Mooltan from 27th December 1848 to 22nd. January 1849. He marched from Mooltan under General Dundas and joined Lord Gough's army and was present at the Battle of Guzerat on the 21st. February 1849. He accompanied General Gilbert's force in pursuit of the Sikh army under Shere Singh, and witnessed them surrender their arms at Hoormuck on the 10th. March 1849. He proceeded in pursuit of the Afghan army thence stationed at Peshawar. He won the Pun jab medal with two bars for the above services. He served with the field force under Colonel Bradshaw which penetrated the Eussufzye country North of Peshawar, in December 1849, for the purpose of chastising the Hill tribes on the Swat border. He was present at the Capture and destruction of the Valleys of Sujas, Pulliwal, Shairkhanee and Zoorumundee in the Bazdurrah Valley on the 11th .and 14th. idem for which he wore a medal with one bar. He was present in the Abyssinian Campaign, of 1868, for which he has received a medal.

Sirdar Bahadur M o o s a j e e K o l e t k a r enlisted in the 8th. Regiment Native Infantry on the 1st April 1842, whence he was transferred to the late disbanded 27th. Regiment N. I., where he was appointed Jemedar and Native Adjutant on the 1st January 1853, and was again transferred to the 12th. Regiment Native Infantry, and promoted to the rank of a Subedar on 6th. November 1858. He was again transferred to the 17th. Regiment Native Infantry where he was made Subedar-Major on the 24th. January 1876. He was made Bahadur with 2nd. class Order of British India on 1st. January 1877, and Sirdar Bahadur with 1st class order of British India on the 25th. October 1879. He was present at the battle of Hyderabad Scinde with the 8th. Regiment N. I. (medal).

He was also present at the Action of Kolapur with the 27th. Regiment N. I. (medal). On the 31st. July 1857 he gave first information of the Mutiny to the officers of the 27th. Regiment N. I., while he was on this duty, his mother was killed and his property to the value of Rupees 7,000 plundered by Mutineers. He is a very meritorious officer of excellent character and abilities — but he was not compensated by the British Government for the heavy loss he sustained.

Subedar-Major and Bahadur D a n i e l T u l k a r was enlisted in the 4th. Rifles on the 1st. April 1842. He was appointed Jemedar and Native Adjutant on the 1st. January 1857, and raised to the rank of a Subedar on the 1st. January 1861. He was also promoted to the rank of Subedar-Major and subsequently raised to the rank of Bahadur in 1878. From the statement of his war services given by Colonel W. B a n n e r m a n Commanding the Regiment we gather that he was a remarkably intelligent and efficient officer. He served with the reserve force under the command of Sir Charles N a p i e r, K.C.B., Governor of Scinde in his Expedition to Bhawulpure in 1846, and was subsequently sent with the Detachment under the Command of Captain Hall which occupied Shapoor. Subedar Daniel left Karrachee on October 26th., 1848, on field service for Mooltan and was present at the Attack on and occupation of the enemy's position in the Suburbs of the City on December 27th. 1848. He was with the Regiment when it stormed the breach (wounded) and captured the city. He was subsequently engaged in all the siege operations until the capitulation of the Fort and Capital on January 22nd. 1849 (medal and clasp).

He also served in the Persian Campaign of 1856-57 during which he was present at the occupation of the island of Kurrack at the landing of the Hallilah Bay at the storming of Rushire, and at the advance on, and surrender of the town and Fort of Bushire, also at the forced march on Barazgoon, the night attack on the 6th. February 1857 ,and the battle Khooshab on the following morning (medal and clasp). He also served in the Central India field force in 1858.

Subedar D a n i e l I s r a e l distinguished himself by bringing up reserve ammunition under a heavy fire at a most critical

moment in Mooltan and his gallantry was afterwards brought to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief.

The late Subedar Abraham David Charrikar of the 3rd. Regiment Bombay Native Light Infantry and Assistant Superintendant of Police Poona distinguished himself as a soldier and a police officer. He served with the Bombay Column of the army of the Punjab in the year 1848 and 1849, and was present at the storming of the Mundee Avah at Mooltan on the 27th. December 1848. He was with the reserve Brigade at the attack on the City of Mooltan on the 22nd. January 1849. He was present during the Siege of Mooltan from the 27th. December 1848 to 22nd. January 1849. He was present at and witnessed the surrender of Moolraj with the Fort and garrison of Mooltan on the 22nd. January 1849. He marched from Mooltan under General Dundas and joined Lord Gough's army and was present at the battle of Guzerat on the 22nd. February 1849. He accompanied General Gilbert's Force in pursuit of the sikh army under Sher Sing and witnessed them surrender their arms at Hoormack on the 10th. March 1849. He proceeded in pursuit of the Afghan army then stationed at Peshawar. He wore the Punjab medal with two bars for the above service. He served with the field Force under Colonel Bradshaw which penetrated into the Eussufzye country north of Peshawar in December 1849 for the purpose of chastising the Hill tribes on the Swat border. He was present at the capture and destruction of the villages of Sugas, Pulliwall, Shairkhanee and Zoormundee in the Bazdurrah valley on the 11th. and 14th. idem. On promotion to the commission in 1853, he received the approbation of and a handsome present from the officers of the Regiment conjointly for the honesty and integrity with which the accounts of the Mess, Pay and Quarter-Master and other funds were kept, extending to a period of nearly 12 years viz.: from 1842 to 1853.

He was appointed Native Commandant of the Ahmednugur Police on the 1st. April 1855. He introduced discipline into the Police and assisted in the apprehension of many criminals and in the suppression of crimes. He was appointed to act as Assistant Superintendent of Police at Nasik in 1857, and was in charge of the Superintendent's office on several occasions. He was also Joint

Police officer in charge of the Talukas bordering on His Highness the Nizam's frontier in the times of Mutiny, when he gave satisfaction. He was in command of Police and served with the Brigade under Colonel Pottinger at the Battle of Tursia Donger in Khandesh against rebel Bheels. He served under the late Sir F.H. Souter, the then Superintendent of Police, at the fight of Punchalla with the rebel Bheels under Bhagoji Naik in November 1859, when the whole of the gang, including Bhagoji, was destroyed to a man. He received the approbation of the Governments of Bombay and India and the Home Government ,and received a 3rd. Class Order of Merit for his gallantry.

Having performed the duties of a soldier, Native commissioned and Police Officer to the entire satisfaction of his officers, he was appointed Assistant Superintendent of Police at Poona, on the 16th March 1863. This gallant soldier and officer died at Poona on the 2nd. November 1867, when he was 45 years old. He was Chairman of the Poona Municipality. Had he lived longer, he would probably attained to the highest rank in the Police Department.

Subedar-Major Benjamin Shalom Nagawkar was enlisted on the 1st. July 1848 in the 25th. Regiment Bombay Native Light Infantry. He was promoted to the rank of a Jemedar on the 1st. January 1868, was made Subedar 1st. January 1873, and promoted to the rank of a Subedar-Major 15th. April 1879. He served in Malwa and Central India. He was present at the siege and Capture of the Fort of Dhar, in the action at Mundisur, at the battle of Guraria and capture of that place, at the Siege of the Fortress of Chundairee, and Jhansi, battle of the Betwa, action at Koonch, Capture of Calpee, action at Moorar, and the Capture of Gwalior (medal and clasp). He served throughout the Abyssinian Campaign (medal). The following is the complimentary order issued on the eve of the retirement of that officer by Colonel C. Jameson dated 7th. August 1881. :—

"Subedar-Major Binniaminjee Israel having been pensioned from 6th. August 1881, the Comanding Officer takes the opportunity of recording his grateful sense of the long and faithful service rendered by this officer, a sentiment in which he is well assured all ranks will cordially join.

"From the day he entered the service until the present date, Binniaminjee Israel performed his duties in the several grades of rank filled by him honestly and to the entire satisfaction of all the Commanding officers under whom he served, and finally qualified himself for the proud distnction of Subedar-Major.

'It is, then, with sincere regret that the Commanding Officer, in the name of the whole regiment with which the name of Subedar-Major Binniaminjee Israel has been so long and honourably associated, bids him fare-well, and trusts that he may live long to enjoy his well merited pension".

Subedar Abraham Samuel Divekar enlisted in the 19th. Regiment Native Infantry on 1st. March 1851, was promoted to the rank of a Jemedar on 1st. January 1872, and was appointed Subedar on 10th. September 1878. He was present at the Battles of Mooltan, Goozerat, Punjab and received medal and two clasps. He was also present at the Afgan war of 1878-80 where he lost his right arm in the battle of Deh-Khoja on the 16th. August 1880 (medal). According to Colonel C. T. Heathcote, "he remained on duty with the Regiment during the whole of the Campaign of 1878-80. He commanded the leading Company at Deh-Khoja and directed them most gallantly, and his cool, steady behavior after receiving his very severe wound was the admiration of all who were near him. Colonel Heathcote specially urged the claims of this Native Officer for immediate recognition by admitting him to the order of British India as his services have proved to be an ornament and a credite"; but his claims have not been taken into consideration by the Government of India. He has retired from the service and gets "wound" pension in addition to the pension of a Subedar.

Sirdar Bahadur Moses Bapuji Mullekar belongs to the 12th. Regiment N. I. He was enlisted on the 12th. April 1851, was appointed Subedar on the 1st. January 1865, and was promoted to the rank of Subedar-Major on the 15th. February 1878. He received the 2nd. Class Order of British India in February 1879, as also the 1st. Class Order of British India with the title of Sirdar Bahadur later on. He was present at the siege and capture of Kotah and the Action of Bunnas (medal and clasp). On his retirement from service Government appointed him Justice of the Peace.

Subedar-Major Shalom Moses Penkar of the 15th. Regiment N. I. was enlisted on the 14th. October 1841, promoted to the rank of a Jemedar on 1st. January 1856 and appointed Native Adjutant from the 5th. September 1857, made Subedar on the 10th. September 1859 and appointed Subedar-Major from the 12th. April 1878. He was present in the wars of Persia, Central India, Afghanistan of 1878-79-80.

Subedar Samuel Moses Nagawkar was enlisted in the 10th. Regiment Native Infantry, on the 1st. October 1832 and pensioned on the 28th. December 1871 after having served for a period of 39 years and 3 months. He was on foreign service at Aden from 1840 to 1844, in the Southern Marratha war in 1844-45, and in the campaign in Central India. He was present at Kotah, Padoon, Chanderi, the Serai, Gwalior, Pawrie, Bijapore, Koodeye, Jhansi, Kharia in 1858-59. He was also in the Abyssinian Campaign of 1867-68.

Subedar Ellojee Aaron Penkar was enlisted in the late 21th. Regiment N. I. on the 1st. May 1841, but on the disbandment of that Regiment, he was transferred to the 30th. Regiment N. I. On reduction in the army he was again transferred to the 28th. Regiment N. I. where he was promoted to the rank of a Jemedar on 10th. July 1864. He was appointed Subedar on 1st. January 1871, and was pensioned on the 20th. January 1879. He was in the battle of Hyderabed (medal). He was also in the Southern Marratha War of 1844-45 including Samunghar, Boodarghar, Punnala, Pownughur, Munohur and Munsuntosh.

Subedar Reuben Ezekiel Mhussilkar was enlisted in the 19th. Regiment N. I. on the 15th. January 1849, was made Jemedar on the 1st. October 1816 and was promoted to the rank of Subedar on 1st. January 1870. He was present in the Battle of Mooltan, Guzerat, the Punjaub (medal and two clasps), Rajgarh, Mungrowlee, Sindwah, Kurai in Central India (medal) Afghanistan 1878-80 (medal and clasp), and retired from 6th. March 1881.

Subedar Tannajee Abraham Gadkar was enlisted in the 24th. Regiment N. I., was appointed Jemedar on the 1st. January 1855, and was promoted to the rank of a Subedar on the 1st.

January 1858. He was on field service during the Mutiny in Central India, and was killed in the action of Jhansi in 1858 (medal).

Subedar Succojee Wursolkar of the 8th. Regiment N. I., was enlisted on 1st. May 1844, was promoted to the rank of Jemedar on 1st. January 1863, and was made Subedar from 1st. January 1870. The praiseworthy conduct of this officer, and of the guard under his command, during the attempted outbreak amongst the prisoners in Yerroda Jail, was brought to the notice of the higher authorities by Major Macnaughten, the Superintendent, when the Adjutant-General of the Army wrote the following :—.

"Having submitted to the Commander-in-Chief your letter regarding the attempted outbreak amongst the prisoners in the Yerrowda Jail, I am directed to request the high approval of His Excellency may be communicated to the guard of the 8th. Regiment Bombay Native Infantry under the command of Subedar Succojee Israel to whom much credit is due."

During the Afghan war in 1880 this Subedar, though a pensioner, applied to His Excellency General Warree, C. B., Commanding-in-Chief of the Bombay Army to be allowed to rejoin his Regiment on its proceeding on active service, as he was still a strong man being only 50 years old, when the following reply dated Poona, 16th. August, 1880, was received through the Military Secretary.:—

"In reply to your letter of the 13th. August I am directed by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief to inform you that His Exvellency highly appreciates the loyalty and zeal which prompted your request to be allowed to rejoin your Regiment on its proceeding on active service.

"Such good men as yourself are always useful to the state and His Excellency regrets very much that you are now pensioned and therefore unable to proceed with your Regiment.

"The Commander-in-Chief will not fail to bring your loyalty to the notice of Government, but His Excellency fears at present there is no probability of availing himself of your services."

Bahadur Subedar Essoobjee Daniel Khurilkar was enlisted in the 16th. Regiment Native Infantry, but on what date is not known. He was promoted to he rank of a Jemedar from the 14th. July 1856, appointed Subedar from 1st. January 1858

and raised to the rank of Subedar-Major from 1st. January 1872. He had a medal for the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, and the star of the 2nd. Class Order of British India was conferred on him. According to Colonel Farquharson the Subedar-Major Essoobjee Israel was a highly intelligent and excellent Native Officer, and his responsible duties he performed in a very able way. When this Native Officer was promoted from the rank of Jemedar and Native Adjutant to that of a Subedar, Major Munro in a Regimental Order stated "that he had much pleasure in recording his satisfaction at the able and efficient manner in which this Native Officer conducted the duties appertaining to his office and he had always found him most zealous and attentive to the various duties entrusted to him.

Sirdar Bahadur Reuben Dhondjee Ashtamkar entered Military service in the 8th. Regiment Native Infantry on the 5th. March 1839. He was appointed Jemedar on the 1st. anuary 1856 and promoted to the rank of a Subedar from 7th. June 1885, and raised to that of a Subedar-Major on 1st. January 1870. He was decorated with the second class Order of British India with the title of Bahadur on the 27th. October 1872, and the 1st. Class Order of British India with the title of Sirdar Bahadur from 1st. anuary 1877. While on service he was in pursuit of the Rebel army under Tantia Topee in Guzerat 1857-58. He served in the Scinde Campaign in 1842, including the march of Kandahar. He was present at the engagement of Hykullze, and served with a Field Force against the Niakara Bheels in the Rewa Kanta district in 1857-58. He was also in Abyssinia.

Last, though not the least important name in the list of the Bene-Israel officers we give is the name of Subedar Abraham Issaac Morbekar of the 19th. Regiment N.I. He entered the military service on the 5th. October 1855. He was promoted to the rank of a Jemedar of the 8th. May 1878, and was appointed Subedar on the 6th. March 1881. According to Colonel Watts, he bears an excellent character. He was in the Indian Mutiny of 1857-57, and served in Central India, Rajgurh, Sindwah, Kurai (medal). He was in the Afghan war of 1878-80 (medal).

With regard to the gallant conduct of this officer during the

Afghan war, Colonel Watts, has favoured us with the following copy of a letter, No.2501, dated 1st. September 1882, from Captain D'Aguilar, R.E., Executive Engineer, Lucknow Division, to the address of the Adjutant General Bombay Army, and stating that the Jemedar mentioned therein for his gallant conduct is at present Subedar Abraham Isaac Morbekar of the Regiment under his comamnd.

"In reply to your 1478c dated 28th. August 1882, I am sorry to say that at this distance of time without written memoranda, it is hard to precise in remembering names and ranks of Native Officers. The Native Oflicer of the 19th Bombay Infantry who in my mind, showed the greatest presence of mind, and talent for command, was a Jew who, before the battle of Maiwaud, commanded at Debrai outpost; I think he was a Jemedar, but may be mistaken in this particular. Just before the battle of Maiwaud there were rumours of detached parties of Ayoub's force, having slipped round General Burrow's, and making for the outpost on the line of cmmunication.

"I was present at Dabrai on or about the 25th. July, when the Sowar in charge of the Bhangy post to Galai came galloping back with a report that there was a large body of enemy behind a hill near the outpost, marching on it; on this occasion the Jemedar had his scouts out, sent gallopers to reconnoitre and posted by his men and helped to make the post (then in course of construction) secure, with perfect coolness and knowledge of what should be done, the alarm turned out false, but the preparations were made as quickly and as well as if the enemy had attacked. Again when we retreated from Milkariz we found the Dabrai Jemedar ready with all his detachment to march, and he had arrested two deserters from the field of Maiwaud (belonging to Jacob's Rifles), while he was scouting for any ambush of the enemy before our arrival.

"In the retreat from the Dabrai, he also showed a cool confidence as well as in the night alarms, for the first 2 or 3 days at Chumun before the defences of the outer enclosure (in which this Officre's half Company were situated) were completed on or about 4th. August, he was sent out to take up a position in the Kojak pass, and to occupy it during the day, to prevent the enemy (who had come down the pass from Thobba in force) annoying the convoys that were passing. He took a position from which the enemy had

been in habit of annoying our parties daily, I think under fire (but I was not then present) and certainly the Chumun end of the pass free, I also think he brought a prisoner or two but of this also I am uncertain.

"I am sorry that I cannot recall more precisely the events, but I know that by his general bearing and confidence, the Native Officer who had charge of Dabrai before the Battle of Maiwaud gave me the idea that he had his head set on his shoulders the right way, and a heart to carry out what his head prompted, and I suppose that some remark of mine to that effect caused this report to be asked for". True Copy (signed) J. E. Barry, Lieutenant, Officiating Adjutant, 19th. Regiment N. I.

We shall now give a list of Bene-Israel officers, whose names and war services have been furnished to us by Colonel C. Burnett, Assistant Adjutant General of the Army, to whom we beg to offer our best thanks :

Subedar Solomon Samuel, Abyssinia 1868, (medal), Afghan Campaign 1879-80 (medal). Subedar Abraham Samuel, Abyssinia 1868 (medal). Subedar Issackjee Satkojee, Abyssinia 1868 (medal), Afghan War 1880 (medal), ZHOB valley expedition 1884. Subedar Abrahamjee Samueljee, China 1862-3 (medal), Afghanistan 1880-81 (medal. Subedar-Major and Bahadur Solomon Daniel with a Field Force against the Naikra Bheels in the Rewa Kanta 1857-8; Afghan war 1880 (medal). Subedar Shalomjee Israel, Afghanistan 1880 (medal). Jemedar Reuben Nussinjee and Ehooda Israel, Afghanistan 1880 (medals). Subedar Daniel Israel, served against the insurgent Bheels in the Rewa Kanta, during the Naikra Bheel out-break in 1868. Subedar Samueljee Israel, Abyssinia 1867-8 (medal), Afghan war 1880. (medal). Subedar Shalom Moses and Jemedar Shalomjee Yacoobjee, Abyssinia 1867-8 (medals). Subedars Reuben Bapubjee and Bunajee Israel Indian Mutiny 1858, Siege and Capture of Kotah, and Actions of Bunnass and Seekur (medals and plasps). Subedar Sillamonjee Sutkojee Indian Mutiny 1858, Siege and Capture of Kotah and actions of Rewa and Bunnass (medal and

clasp). Subedar-Major Haskeljee Israel, Kattiawar Field Force 1865-8; Afghan war 1879-80 at the affair in the Koochale Pass (medal). Subedar-Major (Bahadur) Yessoobjee Israel, Afghanistan 1879-90 (medal). Subedar Eleazer Israel, Indian Mutiny 1857-58 (medal), Afghanistan 1879-90 (medal). Subedar Samueljee Israel, Indian Mutiny 1857-58 (medal), Afghan war 1879-80 (medal). Jemedar Haskeljee Israel, Indian Mutiny 1857-58, Central India, Siege of the Forttresses of Chandari and Jhansi, Battle of the Betwa, Action at Koonch, Capture of Calpee, storm and Capture of Loharee, Action of Morar, and Capture of Gwalior (medal and clasp), Abyssinian 1867-8 (medal). Subedar Haskeljee Israel, Afghan war 1880. Defence and battle of Khandar (medal and clasp), — Egyptian Expedition (Soudan) 1885. Action of Hashim and Tofrek, various attacks on convoys ,advance on Tamai (medal and two clasps), Affairs of Takul. Subedars Moosajee Dhonjee Korlekar, David Moosajee Korelkar, Abraham Moosajee Korelkar, Sillamon David Mhedekar and Jemadar Daniel Samuel Bhonkar. Subedars Sillamon Abraham Borghur-Kar, Samuel David Charrikar, Hyam Samuel Churrikar, Jemedars Shalom Samuel Churrikar, and Hyam Essajee Awaskar. Subedar-Major David Aaron Ghosalkar, Subedars Ellojee and Daniel Indapurkar, Essoob Dahba Sankar, Sillamon Tulkar, Samuel Tulkar, Rahamim Daniel Tulkar, Benjamin Wurolkar, Succojee Bapujee Bhorupkar, Bapujee Warghurkar, David Succojee Bhorupkar, and Jemedar Benjamin Warolkar. Subedar Issajee Sillamonjee Garkulkar was appointed Jemedar by the Right Honourable Sir Evan Nepean, Bart.; on the 11th June 181, and Subedar by the Hounourable Mountstuart Elphinstone on 4th. December 1822. Subedars David Moossajee Dighorkar and Samuel Divekar. Subedar Samaje Sillamon Dandgolkar, was appointed as Jemedar by the Honourable Moutnstuart Elphinstone on the 4th. January 1821

and Subedar from 22nd. December 1825. Subedar-Major Ellojee Dawoodjee Warolkar, had a silver medal and clasp for distinguished service from 1799 to 1826. Subedars Ellojee Dhonjee Killakar, Nissim Joseph Korlekar — the latter was made Jemedar on 1st. January 1857, and Subedar 1st. January 1863; and Subedars Essajee Ashtamkar, Bapujee and Jacob Abraham Ashtamkar. Subedar Jacob Joseph Mendrikar. Subedar Rahamim Poogawkar. Subedar Essoobjee Tulkar was appointed Jemedar by Jonathan Duncan from 8th. May 1880 ,and Subedar from 24th. May 1804; Subedar Bapujee Mullekar, Was appointed Jemedar by the Hon'ble Major-General Sir John Malcolm, G. C. B. from 29th. June 1828, and Subedar from 1st. January 1838, Subedar Shallom Essajee was appointed Jemedar from 15th. April 1856 and Subedar from 10th. August 1857. Subedar Sillamon Bapujee Sankar and Samson Ellojee Dandgoolkar. Subedar Moosajee Borghurkar. Subedars Sillamon Abajee Chicholkar, Ezra Koletkar and Shalom Ballajee Tulkar. Jamedar Samson Jacob Nowgowkar. Subedar Majors Ballajee Bhonkar, Aaron Samuel Ashtamkar, and Jacob Moses Awaskar. Sirdar Bahadur Reuben Moosajee Churrikar; Suberdar Benjamin and Sillamon Dhonjee Pezarkar, and Solomon Bhorupkar. Subedar Sutkeljee Dhonjee Israel, was appointed Jemedar on the 24th. September 1855 ,and promoted to Subedar from 26th. July 1858. He was in the battle of Hyderabad Scinde (medal) — and Subedar Ezekiel Pingley. Subedars David Ballajee Oomerdkar, Sillamon Chandgaowkar, Daniel Morbekar — one Saigawkar, Jacob David Borgawkar; Jemedars Isaac Chandgawkar, and one Saigawkar. Subedar-Major and Bahadoor Daniel Bapujee Kamerlekar; Subedars Daniel Moosajee Penkar and Jemedar Aaron Reuben Divekar. Subedars Bowajee Samuel Bandekar, Samuel Sillamon Wakrulkar, Abra-

ham Samajee Sharpurkar and Abraham Shirgawkar. Suebdars Sillamon Joseph Tulkar and Hyam Samuel Pezarkar. Subedar-Major and Sirdar Bahadur Samson Samuel Killakar, and Subedar Samuel Bapujee Jhiratkar Kaji, served in the Action of Aden and in the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, in the Central India, and were engaged in the Action of Jhansi, Calpee, Morar etc. (medal and clasps); and Jemedar Reuben Samuel Killakar. Subedar Benjamin Elijah Bhorupkar now Chief-Constable at Satara. Subedars Bhowjee Ghosalkar, Bundoo Bhowjee Ghosalkar and Shalom Nagawkar. Subedar-Major Sillamonjee Ashtamkar, and Subedar Bundoo Ashtamkar. Subedar Silamon Aaron Penkar. Subedar Sillamon David Diverkar.

Subedar Haskeljee Israel, (Kolatkar). Kandahar and Pishin 1842; Mainee Field Service 1842; Hyderabad and Umerkot 1843; Indian Mutiny 1857-58, Cetntral India, Siege of the Fortress of Chandari and Jhansi; Battle of the Betwa, action at Koonch, Capture of Calpee, storm and Capture of Loharee, action om Morar and Capture of Gwalion (medal and clasp); Abyssinian war 1876-8 (medal); Burma war 1886-87. Killed in battle in Burma 1887.

Subedar Major Haskeljee Israel (Ezekiel Haeem Talkar). Enlisted military service 1864. Kathiawar Field Force 1865-68; Jamedar 1877; Subedar 1879; Afghan war 1879-80. Affairs in the Koochale Pass (medal); Subedar Major 1890; Pensioned 1893."

Besides the above there were many other officers, such as Subedar Sutkel Kamerlekar, otherwise called Bengali Subedar, Subedar Kehimkar, Subedar Abraham Rohekar, Subedar Ballajee Bhorupkar, Subedar Hassajee Walwatkar, Jemedar Solomon Nowgalkar, Subedar Abraham Ezekiel Dighorkar Subedar Benjamin Bhorupkar, Subedar Abbajee Israel.

Notwithstanding the distinguished services rendered by the Bene-Israel soldiers to the country of their adoption under the British Rule, no enquiry has ever been made by the high officials of Govern-

ment as to who these people are, and what part they have played in the history of this country, nor were they ever rewarded or honoured, in recognition of their past distinguished services, with the appointments of Native Aid-de-Camps on the personal staffs of their Excellencies the Governor, or the Commander-in-Chief. In fact the claim of the Bene-Israel soldiers has always tended to be ignored with no one to espouse their cause. It is only His Excellency Lord H a r r i s, the late Governor of Bombay, who has shown outward interest in a community which for a long time supplied soldiers to the British Army ,and who in course of his speech delivered at the Prize-distribution of the Israelite School in 1893 expressed himself to the following effect :—

"I, being the descendant of soldiers, have a pleasure in making the acquaintance of a community which during the whole of this century, and even before it, I believe, supplied many gallant and loyal soldiers to the British Army in India, and, I trust, though I do not notice it mentioned in the Report this year, as it was in previous years, that the Communiy of the Bene-Israel will continue to supply recruits to the Native-Army and that there are amongst them men who are rising to distinguished positions in that particular profession." Accordingly we addressed a letter to the Private Secretary of His Excellency on the 22nd. March 1893, in which we expressed our opinion, that "if the Bene-Israel could reckon on getting promotion to the rank of Native officers speedily in accrodance with their merits and intelligence, the number of recruits from our communinty might easily increase again."

Another order entitling the young lads of Native Officers to begin as Jamedars in Regiments was promulgated in 1884, but it is a dead letter now. It runs thus :

Standing General order No. 46 of 25th. July 1884 Bombay Army Regulations section VI Direct Commission Para 93 — When considered desirable, sons of Native gentlemen of character and position may be appointed to the Native Army as Jemedars on probabtion.

If the above rule were brought into force, many of the well-educated Bene-Israel youths that are at present in the volunteer corps where they have learnt their drill would be very willing to be transferred to any of the Native Regiments of the Bombay Pre-

sidency, if the age at which they entered in the Volunteer corps were taken into consideration.

From the above it will be seen that the Bene-Israel soldiers were enlisted in almost all the Native Regiments of the Bombay Presidency and by their bravery, valour, faithfulness and intelligence they secured for themselves almost all the staff appointments in the Regiments, and many of them rose to the rank of Native Officers. In fact the Bene-Israel soldiers were the pink of the Native Army of the Bombay Presidency, and constituted almost half of the number of native officers of each Regiment of the Bombay Presidency for nearly a century and a half. To exclude such a body of men from the Army would be detrimental to public interests. It is therefore desirable that the causes which have contributed to lessen the number of Bene-Israel soldiers in the army should be removed. Moreover, the Bene-Israel officers of the Native Infantry Regiments would do very well in the Police Department, as we have already before us brilliant examples of the late Subedar Abraham David, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Poona; and the late Sirdar Bahadur Moosajee Ballajee, Native Commandant of the Tanna Police Corps. It is much to be regretted that the Apothecary line in the Medical Department should have been closed to the Bene-Israel.

It is a well known fact that among Native soldiers, the loyalty of the Bene-Israel is unimpeachable, and their diligence and zeal in doing their duty are entirely exemplary, except that some of them are intemperate. They were, they are, and they will be a very valuable class of soldiers to the British Government in times of danger — the occurance of which God forbid! We believe that many past and present military officers will bear us out in the prophecy that the system of making Regiments or Companies of each caste will prove detrimental to the public service through the ability of the several caste members to combine for Mutiny without its being practicable for their European officers to find out in time their plans, though it might have been well that the suggestion should have emanated from higher authority.

We shall now allow some eminent writers, military officers and

others to speak for themselves as to the capacities of the Bene-Israel.

The late Dr. Wilson in his "Appeal for the Christian Education of Bene-Israel", said :— that "implicit and fully justified confidence was exercised in the Bene-Israel sepoys during the Indian Military Mutiny 1857-58. When the 27th. Regiment of the Bombay Native Army rose in rebellion at Kolapore, its leaders immediately attacked the family of an Israelitish Non-Commissioned officer of their Corps, whom they instinctively viewed as entirely incapable of co-operation with them in their murderous designs *) as snown on page 378. In this Regiment there were only eight of the Bene-Israel when it was disbanded. No charge was brought against any of their number."

Colonel C. W. Wahab, Commanding the 8th. Regiment, Bombay Native Infantry, says that "the Bene-Israel are very intelligent, and avail themselves of every opportunity of acquiring knowledge. They make excellent soldiers and are to be found in many of the Bombay Native Regiments. They are quick at learning their drill, and many of them rise to the rank of native officers. A great many of them learn English, and thus are better fitted for the regimental staff appointments than most of the other castes. Many of them are employed in Government offices and in the Subordinate Medical Department".

The late Colonel F.C. Singleton, C.B., Commanding the 28th Regiment, Native Infantry, says that "the members of the Bene-Israel tribe are a very intelligent set of men. I may say that I consider them as intelligent, if not more intelligent, than any other caste of soldiers I have met with in the Native army.

"As a rule, they learn their drill quickly, are generally above the average as rifle shots, and make first-rate clerks or writers. Although we have had very few in the Regiment, while I have been in it, I have generally found that promotions are given among them out of all proporation to their numbers.

"I cannot tell whether they are a fighting race, but they are most useful men to have in a regiment when on field service".

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*) The Bene-Israel alluded to by Dr. Wilson was Moosajee Israel, a notice of whom has already been taken.

Colonel John Watts, Commanding the 19th. Regiment N. I., states that "as a rule, the conduct of the Bene-Israel soldiers who have served under my command has been excellent.

"I consider them as a rule, to be intelligent and trust-worthy soldiers, and those that rise to be native officers I have generally found to be reliable and efficient in every way.

"Generally speaking, the Bene-Israel soldiers attain a fair standard of education, and are apt at learning their various drills, and in the field many of them have displayed considerable valour".

Colonel F. P. Forteath Commanding the 4th. Bombay Rifles, states that "I consider Bene-Israel soldiers, as a rule, superior in intelligence to the Indian soldiers of other races generally. They learn drill quickly and well and can impart it to others. They are mostly good at accounts, and very useful as clerks in the offices of the Adjutant and the Quarter-Master. They also make good pay-orderlies of companies. As regards their conduct towards their comrades, I consider them rather inclined to be quarrelsome.

"As I have already mentioned, some of the Bene-Israel officers and men in the 12th. Bombay Infantry, to which I formerly belonged, behaved remarkably well during the Mutiny, both in the field and in cantonments.

"There are very few Bene-Israel soldiers in the 4th. Rifles, but I would be very glad to enlist a few more if I knew where to get them.

"In the earlier portion of my service I had much experience of Bene-Israel soldiers, having been several years Adjutant of the 12th. Bombay Infantry, which contained a large number of them. The late Subedar-Major Haskeljee, Sirdar Bahadur, was an officer I had a great respect for, and he and his brothers, Moses and Reuben were very old friends and correspondents of mine."

Colonel T. E. Strong, Commandant 14th. Regiment, N. I., states : "That most of the Jews in the regiment under my command are either holding staff appointments or are clerks in the Regimental offices.

"They are most trustworthy and intelligent, give no trouble in their behaviour, and their educational qualifications are far beyond any class of men in the regiment.

"I regret that the most promising man in the regiment, Havildar Hyamjee Israel, died only a few months ago from disease brought on in this country (Quetta). He was most smart in his military duties and intelligent, and had he lived, he would have been recommended by me for the next vacant appointment as Jemedar."

Colonel Edward Cunningham, Commanding 10th. Regiment Bombay Light Infantry, states that "My experience of the Bene-Israel soldiers in the Native Army is on the whole favourable.

"They, as a rule, posses intelligence and display zeal in acquiring education as soldiers. While their physique is often rather below that of men of other castes composing the Bombay Army, they appear to bear equally well the vicissitudes of campaigning. They are certainly quick at learning drill and other branches of military knowledge, this fact in conjunction with their educational status, qualifying them well for the commissioned or non-commissioned ranks and for the many minor Regimental appointments leading to such advancement.

"In the Subordinate Medical Establishment I have always understood them to be, as a body, a success.

"Their conduct in cantonment is, as a rule, very satisfactory.

"I regret that I am personally not aware of any Jew officer or soldier whose military service is of such distinguished nature as to warrant printed record thereof. Almost every Native regiment has Jew officers, and they, in common with the rank and file, have not, in any case, as far as I know, shewn themselves inferior to their comrades of other persuasions".

Lieutenant G.S. Hogge, Adjutant, 12th. Regiment, Bombay Native Infantry, states to the effect : "With reference to your letter to the Officer Commanding 12th. Regiment, Bombay Native Infantry, regarding Bene-Israel soldiers, I am unable to give you much information.

"We have had many good native officers and soldiers in the regiment among whom I may mention Sirdar Bahadur Haskeljee; he was one native officer in a thousand, respected and beloved by all; he is still remembered in the regiment with respect and gratitude; he was Subedar-Major of the regiment for many years and served with distinction in the Scind Campaign and Mutiny. His brother

Sirdar Bahadur Subedar Major Moses was in the Regiment for 32 years, and did excellent service.

"The Bene-Israel soldiers make good Non-Commissioned Officers; being very quick and willing to learn; but what they may as a rule prove themselves to be on active service, I am unable to give an opinion, as I have never been on service with them, but from accounts I should say that they make good soldiers.

"In Cantonments they are steady, sober, trustworthy, and intelligent men, and always come to the front, half of the Bene-Israel in the Regiment are in the Commissioned and Non-Commissioned ranks, and many qualify themselves to become clerks etc., in the Regiment, a great number being able to speak and read English.

"If there is any other information I can give you, I shall be most happy."

General Montgomery, in his letter, dated Fort Royal, Ruthmullan, Country Dungall, Ireland, 1st. September 1886, writes to say: "I think very highly of the Bene-Israel as soldiers. In the 14th Regiment, Bombay Native Infantry, there were several Native Officers of that race during the time I was with it. Sirdar Bahadur Solomon Israel (Jhiratkar), the Subedar-Major, was an especially smart and good Officer, and excellent driller, and my trusted friend in all matters relating to the regiment when I was in Command. There was another, Solomon Israel (Chicholkar), in the regiment, who was Native Adjutant for some time, a very clever officer also. Besides these there were sveral other officers, Non-Commissioned officers and Buglers, very good soldiers.

"The Native Commandant of the Nagar Police, Abraham David (Churrikar), was a very able man. He served under me in the Mutiny times and behaved exceedingly well.

"I believe that of late days fewer of the Bene-Israel enteretd the Military service their intelligence commanding more agreeable employment in civil life. I have always heard the Bene-Israel well spoken of by my seniors in the Indian Army, who had better opportunity of observing them on service in the field."

Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. Morse, Commanding 12th. Regi-

ment, Native Infantry in his letter of the 31st, August 1892, says: "I do not think I can give you any information about the Bene-Israelites in general, which you have not received already.

"In an old circular of yours, 'A sketch of the History of Bene-Isarel, etc', there appears a letter from Captain G.S. Hogge, who was then the Adjutant of this Regiment, which gives a very true description of them as a body, and during the Afghan Campaign of 1879—81, I always found them good soldiers.

"Never having been under fire I am unable to state how they behave, except from hearsay, but the fact of so many of them rising to the higher ranks and gaining rewards for good service, is of itself a strong evidence of their capabilities on actual service; and from my own experienc, I can thoroughly endorse all that Captain H o g g e wrote about them. The few in this Regiment are extremely good, two being Native Officers, and the small remainder, about 7 being all Non-Commissioned Officres, mostly holding staff appointments. As a body they are far more intelligent than any other class of men, and consequently are also superior in educational qualities. I enclose an extract which will show the conduct and military capacities of two Native Officers formerly of this Regiment. I also send an extract which will show all about the late Subedar-Major H a s k e l j e e. The present fund was raised in his memory by voluntary subscriptions, and is in the form of a charity fund from which two midwives are paid to attend on women of the Regiment when necessary; and advances are made to Non-commissioned officers and men requiring them, and after the reason for the advance has been ascertained to be satisfactory. The Commanding Officer, Adjutant, and the three senior Native officers form the Committee. Other charities are sometimes given from it."

Sir Raymond W e s t, at the distribution of prizes to the Israelite School in 1887, observed "It appears that the members of the Bene-Israel Community in India have devoted themselves to handicraft; many of them have become good soldiers, and a great many have joined the medical service in its lower spheres of Her Majesty's Army. I myself, in the course of my official duties, have several times come across hospital-assistants and members of the other branches of the medical service, belonging to the Jewish Com-

munity, discharging their duties in a higly satisfactory and intelligent manner. In cases wherein they come to give evidence before the court they were always able to state facts with that tenacity and that outward aspect which came before them, which has always characterised the Jewish race in every land and every age."

Again in 1888, on a similar occasion, when Lord R e a y presided, Sir Raymond W e s t, in the course of his observations, said : — "Wherever the British Flag waved, there was sure to be found some member of the Israelite community playing a very useful and intelligent part in all that was tending to the material advancement of mankind".

The Bene-Israel, and the Jews in general have no ambition to gain even an inch of ground anywhere except in Palestine, the possession of which they expect to acquire by some miraculous agency. Their predilection, therefore, lies in the direction of that country, and the cream of their life is the reconstruction of Jerusalem and and the dream of their life is the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the country of which it forms the natural Capital. Nay, so strong is at large that it is ever before the eye of every individual of that race by day and night, and ever does he remember "If I forget thee, O Jerusaelm, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I remember thee not, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Psalm CXXXVII. 5-6.

This animating principle exercises a great influence on all his dealings in life in whatever sphere he may move, whether he be a lord or beggar; and if he thinks it a sure mark of ardent love for Jrusalem to have a pinch or two of Palestine sand placed on the eyes of his deceased coreligionist, a f o r t i o r i the reconstruction of the whole country of which Jerusalem is the centre, where he might "crown a youth of labour with an age of ease", would certainly satisfy all his aspirations in life, and he would think he had reached the ultimate goal of his worldly ambition. This sentiment however does not lessen their patriotism for the country where they live at present, for they have been distinctly commanded by God through the Prophet Jeremiah to look to the country of their residence and naturalization with feelings of great love and true patriotism. (Jeremiah XXIX, 4-7).

It is on this very account that in the prayer of the Bene-Israel on the night of the Day of Atonement for the Empress of India, the Prince of Wales, the Royal family, the Governor General of India and the Governor of the Presidency the following words are inserted: "In their days and in ours, may Judah be saved, Israel dwell in safety and the Redeemer come into Zion. May such be the Divine will and let us say Amen."

Happy, therefore, shall be the day for the Jews and the Bene-Israel when the proud dream of theirs is realised, and glorious will be the condition of Palestine when Jerusalem is re-built by the chosen people of God. But until this desired event is brought to pass, the Bene-Israel, as well as all the Jews on the face of the Earth, loyally regard the country in which they are living as their father-land, and consequently they are entitled to have every disability under which they labour, entirely removed.

CHAPTER X

EDUCATION

In giving the history of education among our people, we shall divide the period of 2000 years into three epochs. The first period may be considered to date from 296 B.C. to 1000 A.D., and is rather a story of lack of education than of its possession. During this period our people must have been sunk in almost total ignorance. As we have no historical documents which can throw even the slightest light on the general condition of India in these early times, and much less upon that of any particular district, we shall have to depend upon traditions in dealing with this epoch. Our ancestors having come from the Northern part of Palestine, i.e. Galilee, the amount of knowledge they can have brought with them must have been very little, because "Galilee, in those days, did not afford the educational advantages which the Province of Judea, with Jerusalem for its centre, afforded. Besides, its close proximity to the Syrians and Samarians contaminated it with many of the Heathen beliefs and superstitions, notably with the belief in evil spirits, demonical possession, and miraculous cures. But what it lacked in the higher education, it made up in morality. The Talmud already comments on the moral superiority of the Jews of Galilee over those of Judea". *) The manuscripts, which are often times the means of preserving and communicating knowledge, and which they doubtless brought with them must have been lost in the ship-wreck. From what little traditional knowledge we posses of the general condition of India and especially of that of the Konkan about this time, we gather that learning was not at all encouraged by the rulers of the several districts of this continent, most of whom were engaged in hostilities with one another. We may safely say that whatever germs

*) Bab. Talmud, Kethuboth 12 a.

of learning our ancestors brought with them from their homes, must in consequence of this state of things have died out in a very short time. Surrounded as our forefathers were by people who were perfect strangers to them, and whose customs, manners, institutions and language had not the faintests analogy with theirs, they were even hard pressed for the very means of livelihood and had therefore no time for literary studies. This epoch continued until the tenth century A.D. As the knowledge of reading and writing were confined to the Brahmins only during this period, our ancestors continued to be as ignorant as the Kunbies, Mallies, Agries and Bhandaries in whose midst they dwelt in o b s c u r i t y, and whose language they gradually adopted. (This view of the matter is set forth by the committee of the Israelite School of the Anglo-Jewish Association in Bombay in their first report, — that for 1881-82, when the attention not only of the Arabic-speaking Jews, but of the people of other creeds, such as the Hindus and the Parsis, was for the first time invited towards the education of the Bene-Israel; for before this time their education had been a matter of entire indifference not only to strangers but also to their own wealthy and influential brethren-in-faith).

The second epoch dates from the time of David Rahabi, who came from Egypt, as we believe, and have elswhere mentioned, about 900 yars ago. The commencement of the study of, or instruction in Hebrew among our people dates from this time. We cannot, however, attach much importance to it, since Rahabi taught Hebrew to two or three children only. He was killed by the then ruling monarch about four or five years after his arrival, and the Bene-Israel children had no opportunity of availing themselves to any great extent of his instructions, or of benefiting much by them and therefore everything was left by him almost as dark as before. The study of Marathi, it is believed, was commenced about 200 years ago (1690), and that, too, under very unfavourable circumstances. In ancient times almost all schools were owned by Brahmins and were usually opened in Hindu temples; consequently the Bene-Isaerl children could get no admittance into them, lest the temples might be defiled; and even, were such schools for children opened in places other than temples, the Bene-Israel children were not admitted to

them for fear of pollution to others by their touch. If any one ventured to admit Bene-Israel scholars through greed of money, the Bene-Israel children were made to sit in a corner, at some distance from Hindu boys and teacher, and were taught only at that distance. When things were in this state, how was it possible for them to obtain a proper education? The poor education they obtained, enabled them to keep their household accounts only. Reading of books was not even dreamt of. Moreover in times when there was a dearth of books ,the art of printing being unknown, it is not conceivable that the poor Bene-Israel were in a position to obtain such. There were, it is true, at this period manuscripts written on palm leaves, which could be produced, however, only with the greatest difficulty, and when any of these manuscripts could be had, they were almost useless to the Bene-Israel as many of them contained mythological and religious stories of Vikram and legends about Shalivan. As these were the only opportunities of learning within their reach, the Bene-Israel children could not well be expected to study or to develope their intellectual faculties. They had, besides, at this stage to fight against numerous difficulties.

While the Bene-Israel of Bombay and the Konkan were labouring under such difficulties with regard to education, there arose a poet about a century and a half or two centuries ago (1690-1740) among the Bene-Israel, by name E l l o j i N a g a w k a r, surnamed E l l o j i S h a h i r i.e. Elloji the Ballad singer. He was of the class of Kalgiwalas, i.e. one who carries a plume or crest in his turban. It is said that he composed on the spur of the moment many religious and moral poems, both in Marathi and Hindustani, in the form of ballads, — a kind of poetry popular among the people in those days. His ballads on account of their attractiveness became well-known among the Bene-Israel, and were frequently sung by them, and we still hear them sung. We have come into possession of a very few of them, and we give these below as specimens, for the information of our readers. We do not venture to translate them as the beauty of the original poems would be lost. It is said that the writer was under the patronage of the Angria who had taken him to the Peshwa at Poona ,where he carried the palm when he was challenged by the Turrewalas at the Peshwa's court to recite

in verses the answers of the questions put to him by them in verses. We regret to say that his poems have not been handed down to us in printed form, since no encouragement was given in those days to literature of this class.

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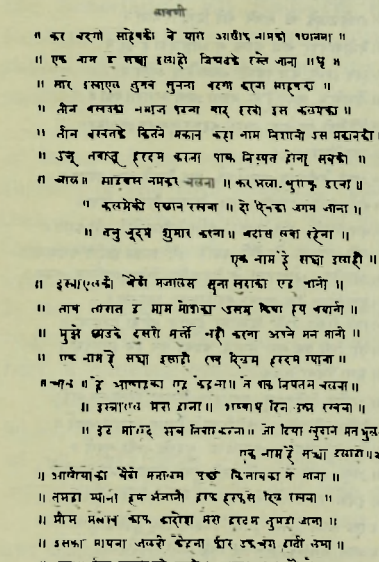

आवणी

॥ कर चरणी साहेबकी वे याणे आशीर्वाद नामकी पछानना ॥
॥ एक नाम है सच्चा इलाही विचवके रखे जाना ॥ धृ ॥
॥ सार इलाएल तुजव सुनना चरणा दासा साहबका ॥
॥ तीन वखतछा नमाज पढना चार हरवे इस कलमका ॥
॥ तीन वखतके कितने मकान कहा नाम निशानी उस मकानकी ॥
॥ उजू नवाजू हरदम दासा पाक निस्पत होनू सकती ॥
॥ चाल ॥ साहबका नमकहा चलना ॥ कर भला भुलाकू इलना ॥
॥ कलमेकी पछान रखना ॥ दो दैनका अगम जाना ॥
॥ तनु दूरव शुमार करना ॥ बदास सदा रहेना ॥
एक नाम है सच्चा इलाही ॥१॥

॥ इस्माएलकी बेवी मलालस सुना सराका एह पानी ॥
॥ ताच तरात ह माम मोशा उसम किया हय बखानी ॥
॥ मुझे छाउडे दूसरे मर्दो नही करना अपने मन मानी ॥
॥ एक नाम है सच्चा इलाही एक देवम हरदम एमाना ॥
॥ चाल ॥ हे आलाहका एह कहना ॥ ते पाक निपतम चलना ॥
॥ इस्माएल मेरा दाना ॥ शरबाध दिन इस रखना ॥
॥ इह मालद सब निसा करना ॥ जो दिया खुदान मनभुलना
एक नाम है सच्चा इलाही ॥२॥

॥ आयेशाकी बेवी मलालस पुछ किनायका न माना ॥
॥ तमझा म्यानी हुब मैलानी हाद हरएक ऐक रसना ॥
॥ प्रीम मैलाव खूब दोस्ती मेरी हरदम तुमका जाना ॥
॥ इसका मायना जबरी बेटना पीर इकरंग हाती लेना ॥
॥ चाल ॥ पीर रसालाचके मलाये ॥ बहतन करना ते बोल ॥
॥ यह राहम ह हावे ॥ ते मलालम म्यान लाय ॥
॥ आठामनु बागाहनु चाय ॥ सब इसका मायना कहेना ॥
एक नाम है सच्चा इलाही ॥३॥

॥ भाप मेरी फातमा इलाही वह खदीज नियाबी ॥
॥ ईसर राजाने राज किया था इनके है सब पह रखाडी ॥
॥ दीन राजाने काज सिवाइ चलाई खाता था मक्य ॥
॥ यानाखान आप गया एकला पास पत्तिवती दरीने ॥
॥ चाल ॥ एह कितायका मलवा ॥ शाहीर वेगेजा बोला ॥
॥ समाएल कुरबानका ॥ उने दिया यानका व्यावा ॥
॥ तेहेन कर बाहल मलबूद ॥ मा एक दाहू दावा ॥
एक नाम है सच्चा इलाही ॥४॥

आवणी २ री

॥ अमागदेव हरफ जुने है तुज लेना गावन भाई ॥
॥ आलाहके ते कहा मायने आदामायकी बादशाही ॥ धृ ॥
॥ बो बगाचा मजानाधका बनाज खातर बतलाया ॥
॥ बेमिसओधान उजू किये ते रुख कितानका पर पाया ॥
॥ यह निम्मतकी पछान तबकू ते ज्यादा क्या बतलाया ॥
॥ काल्या साडगा गाय पलावने गज अंकुशास जेहेर दिया ॥
॥ आणी बेएजीमके किते हकीर पुछे तुसे सब भूल गया ॥
॥ कानसा हुकताग किसहेन पहना इस्का भर नही बतलाया ॥
॥ चाल ॥ इसका मायना जबरी देहना दुष्ट तना अब चबुराई ॥
॥ आलीहदे ने कहो मायने आदोनायकी बादशाही ॥ १॥

॥ इही लोक जर चले मिसासे बेर हुवाषा मठ रस्ता ॥
॥ जर मोशेने हातको मकुल उस पानीपर मारा था ॥
॥ गेही मकुलस मिसरी मारा कितना बेवा गोता था ॥
॥ इस चौथा हिस्सा मकुम व शाहेर तेरी गणता ॥
॥ बेवी सभा करू दश उडू तेरा चय म दई किनायकी सुनवाक ॥
॥ लोगसे ने चलना बशाहेर सद मसाए स्वप्न गया ॥
॥ चाल ॥ पुछ कितावा भर बसव मन करना ने इनाड ॥
॥ आलीहदे ने कहा मायने ॥२॥

॥ आहनाथ लेछायदा क्या माना है बेद देना ॥
॥ साहीम आसे शलाम लोगो हिरो बानके पछानना ॥
॥ इनेनु सहीसीम किनसार डालखाम सारे आना ॥
॥ आना अहोनाथ पडा जिलीसमे कुछ हरदीदा क्या माना ॥
॥ हा चला अब बसाह में है गुरु ग्यानसे पछानना ॥
॥ बिन गुरुका मुहेस हमसे सुही बिन सार नही करना ॥
॥ चाल ॥ बला भर नजरीस नही ता केजाको तुझे है डाही ॥
॥ आलीहदे ने कहो मायने ॥ ३॥

॥ चार कितावा उतरी अगमे समाज रेखा चलवाया ॥
॥ दोनसी किताब दिन दिन उतरी उसका भेद नही बतलाया ॥
॥ इस्माएलका बच्चा होकर सच्चाईन अपंच चूक गया ॥
॥ इसम थोडा दोग अतुरा बोल्लामेने बेसाया ॥
॥ नाथ निरंजन शाहीर मलाजी उनो कितानका पर पाया ॥
॥ नाथ बाबाजी सबाई ग्यानी सब परमे चंग लगवाया ॥
॥ चाल ॥ समाएल रोबेनही घरन सजदना ते सबाद ॥
॥ आलीहदे ने कहो मायने ॥ ४॥

*) The translation of these Lavnis will be found in the Appendix.

॥ सुनोरे मेर कहुरे सुन शाहीरदे बंदे ॥
॥ ऐसे दासले सुनके मान भाव पडगये फीके ॥ धृ ॥
॥ शाहुल राजाने राज दिया ॥
॥ इस्माएलके उपर कमेसर रक्को बोहेलाया ॥
॥ पलिस्ती राजा युध लडाई करने आया ॥
॥ चार लाखकी फौज कमेसर उन सग लिया ॥ ॥
॥ इसराएल फौज देखकर घबराया ॥
॥ जर शाहुलकू इरशत पडगए सुनलेना भया ॥
॥ दासले कहुरे सुनलेव मसले किताबदे ॥
॥ ऐसे दासले सुनके मान भाव पडगये दिखे ॥ १ ॥
॥ पलिस्ती बहाका एक देउलथान निकला ॥
॥ इस्माएलके फौज सामने खडा रहे गोला ॥
॥ तुम्होरेमे दोघी होवगा लडनेवाला ॥
॥ ऐसा आवाजा सुनके इस्माएल कहते तुंही आपा ॥
॥ यह सुनबात कोई वीरेकु गोला ॥
॥ वीर कहता उसे है कौन जबडो मुझे बतला ॥
॥ सिरकु मैंने मार पडके देवे ॥
॥ क्या है उसकी विशार पलिस्ती पासे देऊ डोके ॥
॥ सुनोरे मेर कहुरे सुन शाहीरदे लडके ॥२॥
॥ येह सुन खबर शाहुलकु पाहोचार ॥
॥ शाहुल कहता वो कौनसो उसके ठाव माही ॥
॥ दुशाएका बेरा डोकर सुना भाई ॥
॥ उसकू देखे आये शाहुलके पास सुनो सही ॥
॥ शाहुल कहता खरबाता नही कोई ॥
॥ तूंकया जरेगा उस्के सान तुंहे खबर नही ॥
॥ वीर कहता उस्के जोराचा मार पडके देवे ॥
॥ क्या है उनकी विशार पलिस्ती पासे देऊ डोके ॥
॥ सुनोरे मेर ॥ ३ ॥
॥ वीर बहास निकलके आवा ॥
॥ गया मदी दाम्यान सौल कतार उभविया ॥
॥ बहासे चलदे गोलीयाथके पास आया ॥
॥ गोलियाथ कहता मेर साथ तूंक्या लडण्या भया ॥
॥ आबाहाम इसहाक याकोबका नाम लिया ॥
॥ शाहुन स्थाने फलर डवादे उसे देख दिया ॥
॥ गोलियाथका सौल गयाजी मस्तक ॥
॥ क्या है उनकी विशार पलिस्तीयोंने देऊ डोके ॥
॥ सुनोरे मेर ॥ ४ ॥
॥ वीरदेने गोलीयाथकू मारीया ॥
॥ उनकी तलवार लेकर उनका सौल कादीया ॥
॥ आहली मुखीर मुखीर करे बाता ॥
॥ येलियाहू चातुर किताबके नुसे सुनलाता ॥
॥ हासकेल कवी कवीश्वर बनादेवा ॥
॥ मुसा बापडा दोनोजी मिलकर मजलसमे गाता ॥
॥ बाबाजी कहोरे सुन शाहीरके लडके ॥
॥ ऐसे दासले सुनके मान भाव पडगये फीके ॥
॥ सुनोरे मेर कहुरे ॥ ५ ॥

लावणी

॥ मुसा पैगंबर तोगात पडत औ गाता अवगाहनका ॥
॥ रबाल कुन ताल बाजे आवाज इलाहीका ॥
॥ हरफ हरफके पढे मायने अक्षरी जाने खबर ॥
॥ बाहरव आता कहा आकाश चलत बाहेर ॥
॥ सबोरीमदे बैसे गायने मेलेकर ते अवर ॥
॥ हाडीओमदे वो गायने बोरे मिलेपर नजर ॥
॥ नैनानो नजर बाज करके नो आलूहका है नूर ॥
॥ हरफ हरफके अर्थ जानी चुकता हैनी अबर ॥
॥ तोरातीमे खबरांहैजी मसला आया असगाहका ॥
॥ तेर पिछे एक नाद लगाके कडका सुन उड झाजडका ॥
॥ मुसा पैगंबर ॥ १ ॥
॥ आल नेतीलाप पाइमके हरफ मिलने क्या चलता ॥
॥ बार रसब बसामिन यह लिखत किसपर पडता ॥
॥ बसामिमके हरफ सुनकर हादमनाबीम कोई नही करता ॥
॥ यही हरफकू जो कोइ पछाने ओ काबल इशीर बसनाता ॥
॥ आलीफ आबाहाम ने बनयामिन लाबक गर्भा एन जानता ॥
॥ मुसापगबर नेक बदाका सबलिप्यतकू पछानता ॥
॥ रबने दीवार उस्से लिखाया हजरत बनेवा दुनयाका ॥
॥ तेर पिछे एक नाद लगाके कडका सुन उड झाजडका ॥
॥ मुसा पैगंबर ॥ २ ॥
॥ आबाहा कहेवा नु तुझा हरफ किसपर पडना सुन भाई ॥
॥ बेमिरजीयाथ आबबाहाना पलिस्त कायपर आई ॥
॥ काहुवर पहाडकू जलाहरना चुहात चुपो सरार ॥
॥ उस्कू जगी दिया बहुसम्म कुच तकसीर नही बतलाई ॥
॥ इनक मायने जो कोई पछाने तो तोमे है नही ॥
॥ एक लावन ऐसी [illegible] पैगंबरही शाबू तुझे दाखो ॥
॥ आज मसलेका तकरना किर लगाया बापिका ॥
॥ तेर पिछे एक नाद लगाबू कडका सुन उड झाजडका ॥
॥ मुसा पैगंबर ॥ ३ ॥
॥ औलीयोमे बडबाडके रबने बोलाल ॥
॥ हजरत मुसाको कितनी उमर किसदिन उसने लोगाल ॥
॥ अबस आग कितावा जाहीर तबसे किसी हयात ॥
॥ आमरा इनक्या बाग चुल्या उनके नामका कहा अत ॥
॥ कहो याकोबके बाग बर उनके हजकी कहा बात ॥
॥ अबाब टेकर घर गाता क्यन भुवने सारी रात ॥
॥ कवी एवाजी शाहीर गायन किर लगाया शपतका ॥
॥ तेर पिछे एक नाद लगाके कडका सुन उड झाजडका ॥
॥ मुसा पैगंबर ॥ ४ ॥

*) There must have been more Jewish Shahirs at that period or even before, seing that Elloji mentions one by name R e u b e n in one of his ballads. If the date ascribed by the author to the life of Elloji is correct, then this Reuben cannot be identical with another famous Shahir of that name, known as R e u b e n j i Shahir. The grand-daughter of this last is the well known Headmistress of the Bene-Israel Eli Kadoorie School in Bombay, Miss Rebecca Reuben, M.A. We received from her the following biographical sketch of her grand-fathers life, which throws much light on this subject.

R o b e n j i I s a j i N a w g a o n k a r, i.e Reuben son of Isaac of the village of Nawgaon, was born in Bombay in the thirties of the 19th century. The original home of the family, like that of all Bene-Israelites, was in the Colaba district of the Konkan, the western coast of India. Here they were oil-pressers and agriculturists. When the family left the Konkan and came to Bombay is not known. It must have been in the days when Bombay was beginning to be built up and settled in, for Isaac is known to have been a building contractor.

Reuben learnt to read and write both Marathi and English, but which school he attended is not known. In fact, very little is known of his early days. He was the eldest son in the family, was fair-complexioned and tall, and was of a gentle and affectionate nature.

He was married early, but seems to have remained at home not doing anything in particular. Perhaps as the father was doing well, the sons were in no particular hurry to begin to earn a living for themselves.

The father Isaac, however, was a stern old man, tyrannical in his ways and would spare neither wife nor grown up sons and daughters-in-law in his bouts of fury.

Reuben was now a married man with children. His sensitive nature could not stand his father's ungovernable temper any longer. He quietly left home one day and enlisted in one of the British Indian Regiments stationed then in Bombay. In those days there were very few recruits knowing how to read and write, and Reuben with his knowledge of Marathi and English and a working knowledge of Urdu, was welcomed.

Because of his literary attainments he was installed as a scribe or clerk. Colleagues of his always said that he would have risen high in his profession, as a soldier — as did other Bene-Israelites — if only he had taken it seriously. But he put his mind elsewhere. He found something else in his regiment which took possession of him body and soul, and that was what is known as Lavni-singing. There were two rival camps of Lavni-singers, known as the Kalgi-group and the Tura-group. Hindus, Muslims, even Parsis were members and belonged to one or other of the groups, and took part in fierce and friendly musical contests. The Kalgi-group represented the female element in nature and the Tura the male. The contestants had their meetings, —Majlis it was called — in the evenings and sat up far into the night singing songs previously composed or improvising them on the spot, asking questions and demanding answers in verse, puzzling opponents with curiosities, sometimes making fun of, sometimes abusing each others.

The Lavni is a humble form of folk poetry and demanded no great skill or poetic genius. The subjects ranged over the simple experiences of life, and were sometimes treated in a very crude and childish way, but they appealed to the populace and drew tears or laughter, smiles or frowns from them. Some were alphabetical; some were composed and sung with needles held between the lips, i.e. leaving out all labials; and several other artificialities of this kind were introduced.

Reuben sought relief from his humdrum routine work in the military office among the Lavni-groups. He was a keen Kalgiwala and was soon their leader, composing the songs for his side and leading the singing, the questions and answers.

His songs delight in mentioning his companions. His pet cronics seem to have been Shah Alii and Sheikh Husen, Potanna and Devisingh, Muswanji and Jamset Jamghad, — Muslims, Hindus, Parsis.

Spending the day working in the office, and the night at the lamp composing the songs for the Majlis, Reuben delighted in spending the evenings kite-flying. It eased the strain on his eyes, he said, and let him think thoughts and dream dreams. Very deft was he with his fingers and he was always in demand for decorating

booths and towers during festivals and celebrations. His beautiful paper tracery was spoken of for a long time after his death. He also found delight in washing and dressing and decking his little daughters, combing their tresses with his own hands and decking them with flowers.

But except for this, he seems to have had no time to give to his household or perhaps no love for the prosy details of every-day life. The poor wife had day after day to din into his ears that the provisions were exhausted before he would think of replenishing the stores. Sometimes the outraged wife would greet him with empty dishes and starve him of an evening, pleading and empty larder. He would laugh and promise and forget and laugh again.

The thoughts were taken up by his L a v n i s and he would tap every source for subjects. His wife had to rack the brains for the names of every kind of fish or fruit or vegetable that she could think of ,and he would weave them all in little L a v n i s — crude and childish sometimes — and challenge his hearers to add new names to the list or to acknowledge defeat. Sometimes h e w o v e H e b r e w w o r d s into his songs and puzzled his opponents. On one occasion he had to leave the Majlis for his supper, and went back to it with a song embodying the words of the Netillath-Yadaim blessing.

Work in an office during the day, writing at night, and long Majlis meetings from time to time, — the strain of such a life told on his health and cut short his life. He died in the early seventies of the last century, leaving a disconsolate widow and a large young family unprovided for, and a large book of manuscripts. The widow, wild with grief and anxiety, looked at the manuscripts as the root cause of her misfortune and made a bon-fire of them. Only a few books were rescued. The eldest son was beginning to follow in his father's footsteps and took charge of the manuscripts, but he too died young, and the manuscripts were dispersed or carelessly destroyed. Only one book is now available and that too is in a very damaged condition.

Reuben was known as R e u b e n j i S h a h i r in the Majlis, and had a big following in his life-time; his memory was held in affectionate reverence by his colleagues. A school of followers

is said to have been established at B a r o d a where once the regiment was stationed, but no further details are available.

Here is the translation of one of Reubenji's Lavnis, as given to me by his grand-daughter.

Tell me the meaning of Hebrew words, utter them in Urdu. What is "Barukh Ata", and what "Adonay Elohenu"?

People lived in a beautiful house, there dwelt a "Melekh". Into how many houses does he go? What does he eat, what does he drink? Has he a place to sleep? Say, what do you know about "haolam"? Search and show. Consult "Asher", meet "Kideschanu", ask "Bemizwotaw". Give an account of every little bit, and then go on with your singing ! Where does "Weziwanu" walk? O fool, how have you forgotten all this? What road does he take? Answer if you are a man! Go on and study and grow wise! Take time and answer and then go on with your singing! And where did "Al" disappear? He lived together with "Netilath", not for away from "Hayadaim". Which poet has composed "Tobh"? Composed the naked sword of "Tobeh"? Go and buy "Smiroth" in the bazar. If you have the coin, you can buy it, but if you have no money, what can you do? Forget your boasting! "Shehecheyanu" walks about in the bazar. The bazar is full: walk through it and find him. There the prince " "Wekimanu" is also walking. He will come and loot the bazar! Now then, show me everything. Name and token, looks and language, date and year you have to show. Shah Ali says : Moshe Rabenu's renown is trumpeted forth. Sheikh Hussen asks in the Majlis: what is the meaning of "Lasman hase"? The Israelite has strength, — what can an indifferent man know? These are Hebrew words, says Jamsei Jamghad. Ismail stings. Devi and Robenji, both say : "Fight fair;" How can the blind see knowledge? Of what use is a mirror to them?

A Lavni of a different nature, composed by Elloji Shahir, was communicated to me by Mr. Isaac, a Bene-Israel author residing in Calcutta.

"I cut a watermelon with a knife, whilst I was in my hut. The cow came and ate the melon. Later on I looked for my knife, but could not find it anywhere. I thought, the cow had eaten the knife. But the cow gave milk, and the knife was not in the milk.

We made butter out of the milk, and the knife was not in the butter. We boiled the butter and made Ghi of it, and we poured the Ghi into a pot. And lo — in the pot of Ghi there I found the knife. How is it possible? Find it out, find it out! Well, if you cannot, I will tell you. After I had cut the melon, I put it between the palmleaves that cover my hut. And I forgot all about it. When the sun stood high on the sky ,the rays fell through the leaves, and the shadow of the knife appeared in the Ghi". (I. O.).

Elloji Shahir was a sweet singer, and such are still found among the Bene-Israel ,as is attested by Government high officials, who have from time to time attended their gatherings. Among such we mention the names of Sir R a y m o n d W e s t and Mr. Justice J a r d i n e. The former when he presided at the prize distribution of the Israelite school on the 3rd April 1887, said, "It is as pleasant as it is interesting for one to come here and find as I have found to-day that there are still "sweet singers in Israel". It is pleasant and delightful to find that acuteness and practicalness of intellect, which has always distinguished the Jewish race, is still actuating this so long and widely severed branch of that great family;" while the latter when he presided at the Annual Meeting of the Bene-Israel Benevolent Society which was held in the Israelite School on the 24th. July 1887 said, "We have heard to-day these little girls singing us some of the songs 'that once did sweet in Zion glide.' It was particularly pleasant to listen to them as it came unasked. The sound that saluted us when we came into the room was the golden tongue of the music."

It was in the beginning of this century in the years 1810 and 1812 that the American Marathi Mission Society was formed in America, and the Society sent Missionaries to Calcutta; but they were ordered to leave the country. Two of them proceeded to Bombay where they were forbidden to carry on their mission. In 1813 these Missionaries appealed to Sir E v a n N e p e a n, then Governor of Bombay, and obtained permission to carry on their avocation. In 1815 they opened about 35 Marathi Schools in Bombay and the villages of the Konkan and Salsette, such as Alibag, Thull, Revadanda, Ashtumi, Penn, Panwell, Palli, Tanna, Chundni, Oootum, Manori, Gorai, Vesava, Danda, Kullian,

Bhewndy, Bassein, Kelvi Mahim, Kehim and at many other places. It is said that from a hundred to 150 Bene-Israel children availed themselves of the primary education given in these schools, and some of the Bene-Israel such as Isaac Penkar, Etba Awaskar, Bundu Pezarkar, Elliji Mheter, Gowroji and Isaac Tulkar, Benjamin Waskar, Fakira Pezarkar, Abraham Jacob Kehimkar, Mullekar, and many others were engaged as Marathi teachers in these schools. Mr. Samuel Jacob Kehimkar was appointed the first Inspector of these Schools. He continued to hold that appointment for seven years, and then resigned it, in favour of Mr. Ezekiel Joseph Rajpurkar. Properly speaking, the commencement of vernacular education amongst the Bene-Israel must be dated from this time, when the rudiments of Marathi and Hebrew were imparted to the Bene-Israel children; but on the usual Missionary terms not quite acceptable to the religious susceptibilities of the Bene-Israel, who through all the vicissitudes of their existance as a Communinty had always zealously guarded the purity of their faith and resented any foreign interference with it. At this time Cochinese and other Jews poured in large numbers into Bombay and the Konkan and helped their brethren-in-faith a great deal in the cause of the advancement of learning, and especially of Hebrew. From that time the Bene-Israel children learned to read the Hebrew Bible; but none of them could understand it. This deficiency was supplied by the American Missionaries, who translated the Bible into the vernacular. From this day forward some of the Bene-Israel children commenced an intelligent study of Hebrew. A few years later the American Missionaries closed all their schools and removed to Ahmednugger which then became their headquarters. It was not long before one Michael Sargon, a Cochin Jew, who had embraced Christianity came to Bombay in connection with the Madras Mission in 1826, and established six *) Hebrew and Marathi schools at Bombay, Alibag, Revadanda, Ashtumi and Palli which were attended by many of the Bene-Israel

*) Lands of the Bible, by Rev. Dr. Wilson, vol. II, p. 677.

children. To these he taught the Hebrew Bible, ritual and songs with their proper tunes after the fashion of the Cochin Jews. Moreover, he taught the Bible to some of his Bene-Israel scholars with translation. In the Bombay school, Mr. Sargon at first nominated Mr. Abraham Sargon as a Hebrew teacher; but on his going away to Cochin, one Bundu Sankar, a Bene-Israel, succeeded him, and he in his turn was followed by Samuel Jacob Kehimkar. Having served for more than thirty years as a teacher in this school, the latter retired from service on account of old age and infirmities incidental to it. His eldest son Shalom Samuel Kehimkar then stepped into his place. He also served for more than thirty years as a teacher. In the school at Revadanda David Baruch Rahabi, *) a Cochin Jew, was appointed a Hebrew teacher, and was subsequently succeeded by Judah David Ashkenazi, also a Cochin Jew. The last teacher at this institution was Hacham Jacob Garsulkar, one of the Bene-Israel. He was taught by Bundu Sankar, in the school at Palli. He was called Hacham, i.e. "The wise". These institutions enabled the Bene-Israel to acquire some knowledge of Hebrew and Marathi, and although the Madras Mission closed these schools for want of support in 1832, the Church Missionary Society of Bombay in consideration of the utility of such an establishment for the Bene-Israel children took the Bombay school under its patronage, and kept it under the supervision of Mr. Sargon. In 1837 the attention of Rev. Dr. Wilson was directed towards the Bene-Israel. He opened vernacular schools at Alibag, Revadanda, Penn, Panwell, Nagaw, Ambepur, Ashtumi and at other places in order "to commence the work of Christian Education among the Bene-Israel", and 210 pupils — 159 boys and 51 girls — were said to have been receiving instruction in connection with these schools. Of these 19 youths had entered on a course of superior study in the English Institution in Bombay. The teacher of the Bombay School was Elijah Joseph Rajpurkar, who was also a Hazan, i.e. a Reader in the old synagogue; those of Alibag

*) Not to be mistaken for the hypothetical David Rahabi (I.O.)

Benjamin Aaron Sankar, and Solomon and Samuel Joseph Rajpurkar; that of Nagaw and Amberpur, Abraham Jacob Kehimkar; those of Panwell, Elijah Samuel Nowgawkar and Samuel Abraham Turunkhopkar; that of Ashtumi, Gowroji Tulkar; and those of Penn Babaji and Abraham Dadji Naik Churrikar. All these schools were under the inspection of Ezekiel Joseph Rajpurkar, though they were occasionally visited and examined by the Missionaries. Besides these schools, Dr. Wilson also taught English to about 20 or 25 Bene-Israel boys for about 6 or 7 years, and gave these lads allowances of scholarships averaging between Rupees 3 and 5; and although three of four Bene-Israel boys such as Benjamin Solomon Tulkar, surnamed Subnis Tulkar, and others had learned long before this time in some European Regimental schools, it can fairly be said that there was no regular class for teaching English before the time of Dr. Wilson. Subnis Tulkar held a post of honour in the Bombay Commissariat Department, but died in the prime of life at Bhuj, whither he was transferred. Captain Risto Jervis taught engineering to Abraham and Hyam Isaac Garsulkar, who were appointed Surveyors and Builders in Government service after they had finished their course. In these capacities, they served for a long time and afterwards retired on pensions. Colonel George Jervis, when Chief Engineer of Bombay, gave some instruction in drawing to Ezekiel Joseph Tulkar, and gave him an appointment in his own office, in which he served till he was superannuated. Colonel George Jervis taught one by name Abraham Ezekiel Tulkar, and another Aaron David Churrikar, engineering for about five years. They were in due course appointed Surveyors and Builders in Government Service. There were others such as Jacob Kamelkar, Bundu Bhonkar, Eliezer Koletkar, Jacob Abraham Kehimkar, Reuben Sutkel Pezarkar, Benjamin Bhawoo Ghosalkar, who were for a long time in the corps of Guides, and were subsequently raised to the ranks of Head Guides and Head Draftsmen. Daniel Solomon Now-

g a w k a r was taught by Dr.Wilson in his own School for about ten years, when he was appointed a school master in that school. Subsequently he became a Regimental Writer in the Belooch Regiment where he served until his death. Many of the Bene-Israel children who were taught in Dr. Wilson's school were employed as Hospital Assistants in the Government Medical Service, while some became Assistants in public and private offices. One of the boys taught in Dr. Wilson's school, S a m u e l I s a a c Z a w l i k a r, enlisted in the third Regiment Bombay Native Infantry, and served until he rose to the rank of Sirdar Bahadur by distinguishing himself in many successful a battle, (cf. above). Another of the same Regiment, by name A b r a h a m D a v i d C h u r r i k a r, also educated in Dr. Wilson's School, rose to the rank of Subedar and Native Commandant of the Ahmednugger Police Corps, and was subsequently appointed Assistant Superintendent of Police in Poona. It is said that he had received orders to go to Alibag as Superintendent of Police, but before assuming that appointment, he was removed from this world. Had he lived some years more, he would have figured prominently, and would have graced the Bene-Israel Community yet more highly. Mr. J o s e p h E z e k i e l R a j p u r k a r another pupil of Dr. Wilson, was the Head-Master in the David Sassoon Benevolent Institution. He is a Justice-of-the-Peace and a Fellow of the University of Bombay, and is often appointed Hebrew Examiner. It is worth noticing here that the Arabic-speaking Jews who at one time claimed to be the teachers of the Bene-Israel are now taught under the Head-Mastership of Mr. Joseph Ezekiel, a Bene-Israel. Some of the Bene-Israel children attended the Robert Money Institution, and most of these are now in Government service. After the deaths of Mr. Sargon and Dr. Wilson, tuition in Hebrew was discontinued in the school opened by those Missions. The Bene-Israel were as yet in sound slumber, whilst progress was being made throughout the other multitudes of India's varied population, and they did not show any symptoms of new life and vigour until 1875 ,when some of the young men of the Community proposed to Mr. Joseph Samuel Kehimkar to open a Hebrew and Marathi school for the children of the community, and they promised that they would willingly contribute their quota. He knew

his people well enough to be sure that they would be bold only at the outest, and would not act up to their word, but would give up their connection with the project by finding some fault or other with its manager or its management. He therefore did not at first give his consent to the proposal. But on their reiterated applications to him, he felt himself obliged to do so, and a meeting under the presidency of Mr. S h a l o m S a m u e l K e h i m k a r was called, wherein it was resolved to open a school from 5th. July 1875. The income and expenditure of this school was about Rs. 40/- a month , but it soon dwindled down to Rs. 20./- per month, as had been anticipated by Mr. Joseph Samuel, who had then to exert himself among his Parsi and other friends to help the school, until it could be taken over by a competent body like the Anglo-Jewish Association of London. This Association took the school under their patronage, and inaugurated it on the 1st. April 1881, when an appeal was made to all the members of the Bene-Israel community, requesting them to rouse themselves from the slumber in which they had remained sunk for years past, and exhorting them to make the school a success by energetic and prompt assistance and co-operation, both from private sources and from congregational funds.

As soon as the appeal appeared some of the Bene-Israel readily gave their assistance to the school, and made up the required sum; but it is to be regretted that many of the leading members of the community have shown apathy and indifference towards the school. The Committee then approached Government for a grant of Rupees 250 a month, but it was questioned why a special school for Jewish given in support of the same.
or Israelite children was required, when the following reasons were

1. The education imparted in Government schools is beyond the reach of the Israelite children on account of heavy school charges which their impoverished and helpless condition is not able to bear.

2. There are no Hebrew teachers in any of the Government schools. Whilst in the case of other classical languages, such as Sanskrit, Persian, Latin etc. due arrangements are made for teaching

them, Hebrew alone being left unprovided for, and therefore Jewish or Israelite children cannot cultivate the study of their own classical tongue, which they cherish with reverence. This deficiency can only be met by a special school for Jewish or Israelite children where special arrangements are made for teaching Hebrew.

3. The observance of the Jewish Sabbath interferes with the regular attendance of the Jewish or Israelite children at Government or aided schools on Saturdays. Hence they cannot avail themselves of the revision or the weekly examinations held on that day. Jewish parents cannot be expected to lay themselves open to the charge of irreligion by sending their children to school on Saturdays in violation of the commandment of God, while Sunday is a public holiday according to the religion of our Rulers. Thus all the Saturdays and Sundays that is, 104 days in the year are lost. Besides Bene-Israel children are kept away from school for 18 days on account of Jewish holidays in addition to the 35 days on account of the Hindu, Parsi, Mahomedans and Christian holidays, and the 44 days of the summer vacation. So that Israelite children have only 164 school days as against 234 days during which schools are opened to the children of other denominations. In other words, children in Government and aided schools have 70 days more for study than the Jewish or Israelite children. In addition to this, we have to take into account the number of absentees on the occasion of births, marriages, circumcisions and other domestic occurances. Thus, the days actually spent in school by Jewish children dwindle down to a very small number. Consequently there are immense obstacles in the acquisition of school learning,—let alone college education. Besides this, these difficulties are aggravated by the impoverished condition of the community, and the consequent necessity for children to earn a livelihood as soon as possible. All these difficulties are sought to be remedied by a special school.

4. The greatest benefit derived from the special school is that of religious education, which the pupils cannot obtain elsewhere. Jewish parents rightly think that if their children do not imbibe the principles of their religion at a tender age, they will be tempted to turn from the path of religion and virtue in after-life, a result which they sincerely abhor. It is therefore necessary to have a special

school, both to meet their religious requirements, and to assist them in emancipating their children from ignorance.

5. The special school will be the means of finding out what number of Jewish or Israelite children are not sent to school, and for what reasons. If it be owing to inability to purchase books, clothing or other things, measures will be adopted by the committee to render assistance as far as possible.

This statement was called into question by Government officials who pointed to the large number of Jewish or Israelite children shewn in the returns of the Educational Department. Conceding the objection to be valid, the committee poinetd out that, out of a population of 10 or 12 thousand souls in this Presidency, only 8 boys had passed their Matriculation Examination since the establishment of the University of Bombay in 1857 or in about 24 years. Out of these eight boys, only one had obtained his degree in Civil Engineering, or in other words the percentage was so small that one boy had passed the Matriculation Examination in three years out of a population of 12,000 souls. From the fact that so small a number of boys took advantage of education in Government and aided schools, it was evident that education was beyond the means of Israelite children, owing to their poverty, their observance of the Jewish Sabbath, want of Hebrew instruction and religious education in Government schools, and hostile criticisms on their religion made in sectarian schools. The larger number of Jewish or Israelite children shown in the returns of the Educational Department, it is presumed, receive nothing more than mere primary education, which is quite insufficient to improve their religious, moral and social condition.

Satisfied with the reason adduced by the committee, the Government of Sir James Fergusson Bart, sanctioned only by way of special encouragement a grant of Rs. 1560 annually, which sum the Government of Lord Reay increased to Rupees 2,000 a year.

Messrs. David Sassoon *) and Company and Messrs. E. D. Sas-

*) We would like here to add a few remarks about the charitable activities of the founder of the Sassoon family, the late David

soon and Company were also applied to for their liberal aid to the Israelite school, but they were pleased to give only Rupees 400 (ca. £25), each annually from 1st. October 1882. Messrs. David Sassoon and Company, however, increased their annual subscription to the school from Rupees 400 to Rupees 600 from 1st. April 1888 to meet the increased expenses of the school; but we regret to state that after the death of Mr. S. D. Sassoon they have reverted to the former sum from the 1st. April 1895.

The efforts of the Committee not being crowned with full success, they again appealed to the synagogue authorities, and the Bene-Israel public.

Another appeal was made in the year following with the object of enlisting the sympathies of the synagogue authorities on behalf of the Israelite School. Therein it was urged that if our own people in general, and the Elders of the several congregations in particular, did not sympathise with the wants of the children of their own community, it was unreasonable to expect that others would sympathise with them. It further stated that the committee of the Anglo-Jewish Association of London had had a representation made to them by us on the subject of finances, but that the Committee had replied on the 6th. March 1883 that the Bene-Israel should themselves contrive to meet the increased expenditure on account of the addition of higher standards; that it was evident from the reply that the Association could render no more assistance than what

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S a s s o o n (born in Baghdad 1792, died in Poona on Friday, the 5th of February 1864). He built a synagogue at Bombay at a cost of Rupees 200.000, and another in Poona at a cost of Rupees 300.000. He subscribed liberally to general charities. Shortly before his death he set apart £6000.- for the erection of a Mechanics Institution at Bombay, now used largely as a library and known as the "Sassoon Mechanics Institute". In various charitable acts he spent nearly £150.000.-. When the General Hospital at Poona was founded by him in 1863, government distinguished him by the most flattering marks of respect through the then governor, Sir B a r t l e F r e r e, when David Sassoon i n a n a d d r e s s i n H e b r e w requested him to lay the foundation stone.

it did then, as it had to help many other schools and promote various other objects; that it therefore simply reflected disgrace on the community to depend upon others when the community could help itself in the matter of furthering the wel-fare of its own children; that if our brethren had any regard for the God of our Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they would have carefully considered that appeal. We also added therein that appeal after appeal had been made to them, and yet they had remained as indifferent as ever; that if they were determined not to help the school we should have to stop our connection with the school, for unaided as we had been, we were unable to pull on with the work unless others would put their shoulder to the wheel; that the school could not be a success unless those who did not contribute their quota were prepared to bear their fair share, because it was not a work which could be accomplished by one man; but it required the co-operation of all.

Although education amongst our people has made some progress during the last fifteen years, it has not made such rapid strides amongst the Bene-Israel as it has amongst the higher classes of the Hindus and the Parsis, and we are quite certain that unless the Israelite School, inaugurated some seventeen years ago (1880) by the Anglo-Jewish Association of London, is placed on a sure foundation, the cause of education cannot thrive much in our Community. We might here quote the beautiful saying of Monsieur Cremieux, one of the Jewish Senators of France, "the greater the number of our schools, the less will be the number of our poor." The obstacles that have stood much in the way of the education of our poor children is the poverty of their parents. We are sure no one would call in question the veracity of the statement that education is a very costly thing in these times, and unless most of our people become a well-to-do class (which cannot be accomplished but by means of good education) the education of their children must remain precisely in the same state in which it has been for years past. We are very sorry to find that the remissness on the part of Bene-Israel parents to educate their children, and their poverty have marred the prospects of many a young intelligent and promising Bene-Israel boy, and this accounts for the low percentage of educated men in our midst. If we take into account the number of our people in the

Bombay Presidency, we cannot but conclude that one out of a thousand Bene-Israel can scarcely lay claim to a liberal education. There are some amongst us who have a mere smattering of English; but a mere smattering of such things is no education according to our view.

The apathy and indifference shown towards education by many of our people, omitting a few honourable exceptions, should be removed before the Bene-Israel community can expect to be reckoned among the highly educated communities in the Bombay Presidency. Making a due allowance for their poverty, we think that many of the Bene-Israel parents can afford to confer on their children the advantages of liberal education; and we must exhort them once more that they must retrench the unnecessary expenses incurred by them on the occasion of birth, marriage, death etc., and that they should appropriate the savings thus effected towards the education of their children. If they follow the two precepts mentioned above, there is no doubt that the Bene-Israel young men will be able to compete with the most educated classes in India in times to come, and will be able to keep pace in the race of intellectual development so vigorously pursued in this country, with the highly civilised races of the world. The Anglo-Jewish Association of London, the Bombay Government and the Sassoon family have already given them the facilities for reaping the benefits of education and we are glad to state that the Joint Schools Committee of the Bombay Municipality have also given a grant-in-aid to the Primary Branches of the Israelite School according to the results of the examination, from April 1895 ;and we therefore hope that the Bene-Israel will avail themselves of such an excellent opportunity as this.

Before we close this chapter we shall mention the name of the gentlemen who have taken interest in the cause of education of the Bene-Israel.

The late Sir B a r r o w H. E l l i s K.C.S.I., one of the most distinguished administrators whom this Presidency had known for a long time, took much interest in the advancement of the Bene-Israel. He had ample opportunity to observe them closely while he was serving in the civil service of the Bombay Presidency, and it

was he who especially supported our application for a school of a Jewish character for the Bene-Israel, in a meeting of the Council of the Anglo-Jewish Association of London. He also asked Lord Reay when coming out as Governor of Bombay to take an interest in the Bene-Israel school. His efforts on behalf of the Bene-Israel will long be remembered by that community.

Lastly we shall write about the present condition and curriculum of the Israelite School.

The Israelite-School imparts education in English, Hebrew and Marathi from the first Vernacular Standard up to the matriculation class, both to boys and girls, the former being also taught drawing and the latter needle-work, in addition. During the last twenty-seven years this school has done quiet but steady work and has proved not only a great success, but an inestimable boon to the poorer class of the Bene-Israel Community; and the sound work it has been doing, has been more than once testified to, and favourably reported upon, by Government Educational Inspectors. Moreover, several of the boys educated in this school have succeeded in obtaining employment in Government and other Mercantile offices, while others are honestly earning their bread in the mercantile line. The school is attended on an average by about 200 boys and 100 girls, and the main support received by it annually from different sources is as shown below :—

The Anglo-Jewish Association of London £200 or nearly Rupees	Rs.	3,000.0.0.
The Bombay Government	"	2,000.0.0.
The Sassoon Family	"	800.0.0.
The Joint-Schools Committee	"	600.0.0.
The Bene-Israel in fees and subscription	"	1,000.0.0.
Surplus from school syangogue income	"	300.0.0
	Rs.	7,700.0.0

No doubt the present school under the auspices of the Anglo-Jewish Association of London, the Bombay Government and the Sassoon family has done a great amount of good to the community; and the scope of its present work is now calculated to elevate the condition of the people to an appreciate extent. But the stability

of the school, is we regret to say, a matter of great uncertainty, as a diminution in any of the contributions shown above, or a sudden increase in the school rent, would not only affect its condition but would threaten its very existence. It is therefore necessary that the school should be placed on a sure and permanent basis, which cannot be done unless rich and philanthropic gentlemen, without distinction of caste or creed clime or country, come forward and lend a helping hand to its work, which labours to improve the condition of the Bene-Israel rising generation, amongst whom are the children of Bene-Israel Veteran officers who fought for the British Government many a hard and contested battle, such a sat Seringapatan, Poona, Multan, Gugerat, Hyderabad, Jhansi, Calpi, Cawnpore, Gwalior, Delhi, Persia, Cabul &c., Such aid will place the Bene-Israel community in a position to provide for all their urgent educational wants, which may be summarized as follows: —

1. A permanent endowment, sufficient to maintain from its income the establishment of the Israelite school which has just been developed in to a High School, and is now capable of teaching English, Hebrew, Marathi and other subjects as far as the Matriculation or College entrance course, under the tuition of Jewish Masters and Mistresses from England, who can give secular, moral and religious education to Bene-Israel children.

2. A spacious building for the Israelite School in Bombay, with a play-ground and gymnasium attached thereto. The present school being located in a hired building which is not suited for school purpose.

3. A good library furnished with English and Hebrew classical and religious works.

4. A workshop where such of the Bene-Israel as are destitute of any means of support and a majority of them would, by-the bye. answer this description — can be trained in the elements of some useful trade and handling of tools and thus acquire an honest, respectable and independent means of livelihood in their after-lives side by side with their cherished custom of abstaining from every kind of work on Sabbaths. This workshop should be large enough to admit 200 or 300 Bene-Israel children at a time.

The Committee therefore appealed to all the wealthy and philantropic gentlment of Europe, America, and Asia, ever ardently desirous of ameliorating the condition of suffering humanity to come forward with their liberal donations and thus advance, through the medium of education suited to the requiremetnts of modern times ,the material welfare of about 2000 children who are sinking in ignorance and poverty.

The charities of many European, American and Asiatic m i l i o n a i r e s are truly catholic and princely and the Bene-Israel community, consisting of about 10,000 souls, earnestly look up to them for patronage which will tend to elevate the intellectual, moral and social condition of this isolated and neglected branch of Israel, sunk as it is, in ignorance both secular and religious. But this appeal has not yet been responded to by the charitable public. The necessity of a school building was, however, urgently felt, as the rent of the premises occupied by the school which was originally Rs. 50 per month, has been considerably raised from time to time and now stands at no less a sum than Rs. 150 per month, and this is likely to be still further increased. It may easily be imagined that this item of rent is a very serious drain on the limited income and resources of the Institution, and will materially cripple the useful work which is being done at present, unless a building of its own is provided. The necessity for such a building was brought to the notice of the wealthy and philanthropic Jews in Europe and America, but it is to be regretted that their answer was disappointing, as they said that all assistance to Educational Institutions in India should be sought for locally, and that they wished to spend their riches without distinction of caste or creed for the benefit of the children of the land in which they acquired them. The necessity for a school building was also represented to the Anglo-Jewish Association of London, who very generously took up the matter and have started a Building Fund, and have promised to contribute about Rupees 18,000 towards that object. We brought to the notice of the Bomaby public the answer of the Jews in Europe and America, but we regret to say that only the following gentlemen have up to this time subscribed towards the building fund which requires between sixty and seventy thousand rupees.

List of Donors, Israelite School Building Found.

LONDON

	Rupees.
Anglo-Jewish Association	29,485
Bombay Government	20,000
Messrs. Rothschild & Sons	8,343
Mrs. N. Montefiore	7,500
Mr. C.G. Montefiore	3,750
Baroness De Hirsch, — Paris	3,700
Mr. F.D. Mocatta	2,345
Mr. E.A. Franklin	750
Mr. O.A. Goldsmid	750
Other Donors	400

INDIA

	Rupees.
Messrs. David Sasson & Co.	5,000
Mr. S.E. Sassoon	1,000
Mr. Shalom Isaac Sagavkar	1,000
Bai Motlabai	700
Mr. J.N. Khatav	300
H.E. Lord Harris	250
Mr. Jacob E. Sassoon	1,500
Mr. D.M. Petit	1,000
Bai Dinbai N. Petit	800
Mr. Joseph Samuel Kehimkar	500
Mr. Ezekiel J. Pugavkar	300
Mrs. Leahbai Kehimkar	250
Other Donors	1.150
Mr. Shalom Samuel Kehimkar	1,000
Dr. V.S. Divan in memory of Dr. Abraham Hyams	500
Mr. Hamabai Ezekiel Jacob Bhorupkar, a house and	7,000
Mr. Mordechai Aaron Mazgavkar	2,000

CHAPTER XI

Communal Affairs

We shall divide this part into three periods : Communal affairs before the religious revival, communal affairs after the religious revival ,and communal affairs after the establishment of synagogues.

As regards the first, we shall only give what we have learnt by tradition — that all the rites and ceremonies, such as circumcision, marriage and death, as well as those of slaughtering animals, were performed by a man appointed by the Community, and nothing but "K e r i y a t h S h e m a" i.e. "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord", was repeated on every occasion at that time.

As for the communal affairs after the religious revival by David Rahabi, we may state that his three disciples who were of the families of Jhiratkar, Shapurkar and Rajpurkar came into office as Kajis after his death. *) As time rolled on every male member of the Kaji families was called Kaji, and though their head quarters were chiefly at Alibag, Revadanda, Ambepur, Panwell and Murud, they went wherever their services were required to perform the rites and ceremonies of the people, and also to manage and settle communal affairs such as inquiries about the desecration of religion, family disputes etc., with the help of some influential men in the community of the place. For all these functions Kajis received fees, as well as their travelling and other expenses. Besides a Kaji was invited on every festive occasion, as a matter of course. All the company had to wait until he or his representative came in, for no ceremony could begin before either the Kaji or his representative was present. The Kaji received special honour and precedence in every ceremony

*) It would be desirable to get detailed information of these supposed disciples of the supposed David Rahabi! (I.O.).

and festivity. He was entitled to a double share in feasts given on the occasion of birth, marriage, death, vow etc. The double portion to which a Kaji was entitled was handed over to his representative when he was absent. Our readers might perhaps be astonished, but they must remember that the practice of giving a double portion prevailed among ancient Hebrews. (Gen. XLIII, 34; XLV, 22.)

Dr. M.M. Kalisch in his Historical and Critical Commentary on Genesis observes that the practice of giving larger shares was among other ancient nations a usual mode of showing preference and marked honour (Hom: Odyss: IV. 437; Illiad. 321).

The Kajis were exempted from paying the house tax and cattle toll, and were entitled to receive gratuitlous labour when required. Under the British Government, the Bene-Israel Kaji in Bombay was also employed in succession on a monthly salary to administer the oath to the Bene-Israel in courts; but for the last 30 or 40 years the appointment has been dispensed with. The Jhiratkar and Shapurkar Kajis had jurisdiction all over the Konkan including Bombay and Pant Sachew territory; while the Rajpurkar had jurisdiction all over the Janjira state as well as that portion where there was a province of the Peshwa. The performance of the rites and ceremonies of Regimental Bene-Israel was made by a person nominated by them, and styled Mulnaji. Now-a-days the Kajis have ceased to receive the respect which they had in times gone by. It is entirely at the option of the people to have a Kaji or not; the question being finally decided in 1857-58 in a case that was raised at Alibag regarding the rights of Kajis. Since then almost all the ceremonies are performed by the Hazan (Reader) who gets the fees which Kajis once received.

Next in order come communal affairs after the establishment of synagogues. When, either on account of trade or some other reason, a number of Bene-Israel families begin to pour into a place and fix their abode there, they naturally feel the want of religious education, which requires the services of a Hazan, or Reader, and of a Shamash or Beadle. But as the services of these cannot be secured free of charge, they naturally set on foot religious organisations among themselves, through which they raise funds to disburse the expenses. As the services of the above

mentioned officers are indispensable to one and all, every body prepares himself to pay proportionately or according to his ability. To effect this, union amongst them is required; which leads to the foundation of the congregational organization. The congregation being thus organized, they set a-working to appoint congregational and synagogue officers, the former being honorary, the latter paid ones.

The officers appointed among the Bene-Israel to look after the communal and synagogue affairs are a M u c c a d a m (headman) 4 or 5 C h o g l a s (councillors) and a G a b b a i (Treasurer). They are all honorary officers; while the H a z z a n (Reader) and the S h a m a s h (Beadle) are paid servants of the Community, and are to act under the direction of the honorary officers. We shall give the mode of the election and the duties of each of these officers for the information of our readers.

The office of M u c c a d a m, or headman, generally falls to the lot of one who has some influence over the community by reason of his high position in Government service, or of his being a man of affluence or of his being one who has built a synagogue at his own expense ,or contributed a greater share than others to the building. He is recognized as a Muccadam by the people, who pay him special honour and precedence. They would not deprive even his descendants of the office of Muccadam, provided the dsecendants keep up their position. But as soon as they are reduced to poverty or abuse the headmanship, people ignore their office. To make this matter more clear for our readers, we would mention here that the Churrikar Naik being the recognized servant of the Angria Government, had become the leader of the community at Alibag. Moreover, the chief of Kolaba had conferred on him a s a n a d, and had ordered that special honour should be given to him and to his descendants by the Bene-Israel, as will be seen from the copy of a S a n a d we have given in chap. III. But his descendants having been reduced to poverty, the office of headmanship almost ceased in that family. B a p u j i D o o d k a r was a man of great affluence, and was Muccadam at Revadanda, but his descendants having been reduced to poverty, his office also ceased in that family. S a m a j i H a s s a j i D i v e k a r who was native com-

mandant in the 6th. Battalion and built a synagogue, and consequently he was reckoned headman, but as his descendant abused the office of headman he was dismissed from the post.

The duty of the Muccadam or headman is to settle all caste questions and family disputes amicably; but should the disputing parties not come to an amicable settlement, then it is his duty to call a meeting of adult members of the community, after receiving a fee of a Rupee and a quarter from the complainant. The meeting is convened on the night of the second or third day after receipt of the fee, when they hear the complainant and the defendant. In taking evidence they caution witnesses to speak the truth, but do not exact a formal oath. The case is decided with the consent of the C h o g l a s or councillors; but should the caste people attending the meeting differ from them, they are asked to give their reasons for it, and if found sound, the case is disposed of accordingly. If the defendant is at fault, they make him pay the fee for convening the meeting; moreover he is fined or excommunicated, but excommunication is no longer applied so freely as it was during past generations, for owing to disunion among the community, the excommunicated man in such case joins another party. Should the case be not proved against the defendant, the complainant's fee is not returned to him. If however the disputing party does not consent to the settlement of the case by the caste, they resort to the law-courts.

Besides this, the Muccadam or headman has to look to the interest of the synagogue, and devise plans for bettering its income, and control expenditure with the cognizance of the C h o g l a s. He has also to settle the dates of marriage, and order the burial of the dead. In fact without his permission no caste meetings are held, nor can any invitations of marriage, circumcision, burial, vows etc., be given by the S h a m a s h or Beadle. All invitations are given only after the usual fee for such occasions is received. No fee is demanded for burial. The H a z a n or Reader and S h a m a s h or Beadle are to work under the immediate orders of the Muccadam who must, of course, be invited on all festive occasions. But it is optional for him to come.

We shall now explain the election of Choglas and their duties.

They are chosen from among the elderly members of the community, by the Muccadam, who selects such men as will suit him; and their appointment is confirmed by the caste in a meeting held for that purpose. Their duty is to help the Muccadam or headman with their advice and counsel, in all matters of caste questions, and in settlement of family disputes. They are to be present at all caste meetings, and control the expenditure of the synagogue in conjuncion with the headman. Such being the duty of Choglas, many of them remain under the thumb of the Muccadam, and servilely nod their heads to what he says — hence the ruinous condition of our synagogues and the community in general. These Choglas are invited on every festive occasion, and are honoured with a double share, after the headman.

The election of G a b b a i, or Treasurer, is also made by the Muccadam; and his appointment is confirmed by the caste, in a meeting held for that purpose. The duties of the G a b b a i or Treasurer are to look after all the financial affairs of the synagogue. He should recover, through the Shamash or Beadle, all the money offerings that have been made to the synagogue; and receive fees on account of marriage, circumcision, vows, fines, rents, etc., and pay the Hazan, Shamash and other officials, if there be any. He should make all necessary purchases for the synagogue and keep the accounts of income and expenditure, and render the same annually to the community. But he is an honorary officer. He being neither a paid servant nor a Commission Agent, the community has to take work from him according to his whims and caprices. Hence many a time it happens that the correct accounts of the synagogue funds are not found. He is invited on every festive occasion and is also honoured with a double share, after the Choglas.

The appointment of Hazan or Reader is also made by the Muccadam or headman, and is confirmed by the caste, in a meeting held for that purpose. The duties of the Hazan are to read prayers in the synagoue, perform all ceremonies connected with circumcision, marriage, death, vows etc. Besides his monthly salary, which varies from Rupees 15 to 30, he gets fees for ceremonies which the Kaji once received. Moreover he gets from two to four annas, for slaughtering a sheep or goat, and their daily number is about 4 or 51, while

on Friday they number about 8 or 10, and on holidays about 20 or 30. Besides this, he gets some perquisites in the month of Tishree. In fact he performs all the duties which the Kaji did in former times. He is invited on every festive occasion. He receives in general honour and precedence as the Kaji did at one time.

The appointment of the Shamash or Beadle is made by the Muccadam. The duties of the Shamash are to sweep and light the synagogue, make K i d d u s h or prepare grape juice, give invitations to the people or festive occasions, marriages, circumcision, death, vow etc., for which he gets fees from 8 annas to one rupee. He also gets some perquisites in the month of Tishree. He gets no fee for the invitation to communal meetings and funerals. He is also to recover all the money offerings made by the people to the synagogue and hand them over to the Gabbai or Treasurer. He must likewise attend all funerals.

Since the time when S a m a j i H a s s a j i D i v e k a r was raised to the rank of a Native Commandant (identical with the present rank of Subedar-Major) in the Army of the Honourable East India Company, his family was generally known as C o m m a - d a n s. This word is a corruption of the English word "Commandant". Samaji Hassaji built at Bombay a synagogue for the community in 1796, out of gratitude for his miraculous deliverance from the massacre during the third Mysore War. Some say that the cost of purchasing the site and of building the synagogue was defrayed by himself, while others maintain that it was built after the death of his brother S o l o m o n H a s s a j i D i v e - k a r, also commandant, at the cost of his widow Hannabai. There was no inscription on the Synagogue that would throw light on the identity of the person at whose expense it was built. We learn from the marble slab fixed to the synagogue after it was rebuilt by the members of the community, that it was originally built by Samaji Hassaji Divekar. The following is the inscription now on the slab.

"This synagogue was built by S a m u e l E z e k i e l D i v e - k a r, Commandant 6th. Battalion 1796 A.D., which being smaller was enlarged and reerected at the expense of the Bene-Israel community. Dedicated on the 24th. March 1860".

Since the time when this synagogue was first built by Samaji Hassaji he was regarded as Muccadam by all the people of the Bene-Israel community at Bombay. He died at Cochin in Malabar, in 1797, whither he had gone to fetch the scrolls of the law. After his death, his two widows Rajoobai and Rahamanbai, to perpetuate their husband's name, adopted the son of his brother Essaji Hassaji Divekar, Commandant. The name of the adopted son was David surnamed Dada Commadan, who then succeeded as Muccadam or headman. Essaji Hassaji had two other sons, one of whom was Abraham, and the other Aba Saheb. It appears that Aba Saheb died without issue, while Abraham had four sons and two daughters. Dada was not appointed Muccadam (headman) by virtue of any Sanad, charter or letters patent from Government, but he was elected Muccadam by the community simply because his father had built a synagogue for the community. The document produced by the descendants of Dada and his cousin to show that they held the appointment of Muccadam by virtue of a letter said to have been written by the consent of the community, but which in fact is only signed by about two dozen persons out of a community of some six or seven hundred people ,and registered in the Registrar's office of the Supreme Court of Judicature of Bombay, is nothing more than a letter authorizing Dada's son David and his nephew Ezekiel Abraham to issue on his behalf passes of admission to passengers on boats sailing to the Konkan. This practice was enforced by the British Government of the time to deter Badmash characters from coming to Bombay or going to the Konkan. We obtained from the Prothonotary a copy of this letter, which was put in by Mr. Ezekiel Abraham Divekar Commadan in suit No. 581 of 1879, David Hyam Divekar V/s Sarabai and others filed in the High Court of Bombay. The following is a copy of the letter in question :—

The Worshipful B. Doveton Esqr.,
Collector of Customs,

BOMBAY.

The humble petition of David Samuel formerly Head-man Muccadam, of Jew caste, inhabitant of Bombay.

Most humbly sheweth,

The Governor in council has been pleased to make an order to the Muccadams of every caste that they must take care and diligence of their caste people who are coming and going out from the Presidency in regard to the Robbers, Vagabonds " etc., entering into the Presidency and to sign upon pass-notes accordingly ordered to your petitioner in obedience to the order of your Honourable Board, but the Officers of the Custom masters objecting to the signature of your Petitioner upon Pass-notes, therefore your Petitioner humbly begs to annex herewith the certificates obtained from the members of the caste, and in trust your honour will be pleased to confirm it.

And your Petitioner as in duty bound shall ever pray.

Bombay (Sd.) David Samuel
25th. February, 1833.

We the undersigned members of the Jew caste or Israel caste do hereby declare and acknowledge that David Samuel (or his two sons named Samuel David and Haskel Abraham Divekar in behalf of him) is an ancient Muccadam or head of our caste, he is to sign every pass-note required whenever any person of caste in general may be proceeding to out-stations. This we grant him, dated the 25th. day of February 1833.

Sutkel Nissim Kaji ; Issac Abraham Kaji ; Bunnaji Alloji Belolkar Maistry ; Balkoji Ramaji Khanavkar Havildar ; Esba Essoobji Jhiratkar Gubbai ; Ettoo Jacob Shirgawkar Hazan ; Bundoo Ramaji Pugawkar ; Sillamon David Divekar Subedar ; Succoji Essoobji Rajpurkar ; Haskel Daniel Khandalkar ; Abraham Pittaji Awaskar; Jacob Ballaji Bhorupkar; Mordecai Abraham ; Abaji Ballaji Awaskar ; Samuel Jacob Divekar Maistry ; Samaji Jacob Divekar ; Jacob Boowji Nowgawkar ; David Aaron Ghosalkar Subedar ; Samuel Sillamon Tulkar Jemadar ; David Abraham Palkar Havildar ; Samuel Sillamon Wakrulkar Jemedar; Samson Samaji Killekar Jemadar, Native Adjutant.

The foregoing petition and Muccadamship were duly registered in the Registrar's office of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Bombay on the 18th. May 1833 in Book marked with letter (N) page 253 to 254 which I certify.

A. L. Turner,
Registrar.

The usual signatures of those Muccadams named Samuel David and Haskel Abraham of the Jew caste to be taken on the passporte lists at Musjid and Mahim Custom House.

B. Doveton,
Collector of Customs.

Bombay Custom House, the 22nd. May 1833.

From the time when Dada succeeded his father as Muccadam, he discharged the duties of his office in a splendid manner, and acted in concert and harmony with the advice of his Choglas in all the caste disputes and affairs of the community. His care for the honour of his community was so great, that he used to take special measures to secure the ladies of the community against any degradation to which they might be exposed. To illustrate our assertion we might be allowed to mention here that when Police arrangements in Bombay were not so perfect as at present, Dada used to send word through the Shamash or Beadle of the synagogue to all the Bene-Israel requesting them not to send the ladies of the family out on any account during the last two days of the Hindu Holi—holiday and the Moharam ; for during the former obscene language was likely to be used by some of the lowest Hindu at the very sight of a woman, while during the latter there was every probability of their being molested by the vagabonds. His respect for the fair sex of the community and attention to them rendered him dear to every one. People therefore loved and respected him. Ordinary caste disputes were decided by him with the advice of the Choglas, and all important matters were decided by the Jamat, i. e. at a meeting of the Community including the headman and the Choglas. This state of affairs continued for some time, but it is a matter of regret that the condition of affairs was changed from good to bad. Some say that Dada detested those people who had revived the fashion of keeping heathenish women, and reviled them in public, as he would not allow such persons to take Sissith or fringe on their persons during prayer in order to prevent their example being followed by others ; nor would he allow those persons whose daughter or daughter-in-law was found to be of bad character to wear turbans. All this he did to maintain the standard of high morality among the people,—but hence these people, and their relatives began to bear a grudge

against him; while others say that Dada had become elated with pride on account of the acquisition of wealth and the birth of children, and had commenced to exercise his own authority over the people in a high-handed manner. Moreover it is said that when Dada's sons and his nephews reached mature age, they prevailed upon him to be guided by them rather than by the advice of Choglas. All ordinary caste disputes and the affairs of the community were from this time decided by Dada according to the dictates of his sons and nephews. The nominal advice of the Choglas was only sought for as a mere formality, and all important matters were said to be decided by the Jamat which was completely under his thumb, and its decision was always in harmony with his own. Whatever may be the true cause, (which cannot now be ascertained at this distance of time) the anger of some of the people became kindled against Dada from that time, and it was manifested by those who had a grudge against him, separating themselves from him in 1823. This Schism was headed by Subedar Sillamon Bapuji Sankar as will be seen from the following letter. :—

"We the undersigned persons of the Israel caste do hereby nominate, constitute and appoint Sillamonji Bapuji Sankar Subedar Muccadam and Danielji Dawoodji Nagawkar Maistry head Manager, and Danielji Abrahamji Javlikar, Bapuji Tanaji Aptekar and Abrahamji Badonji Thulkar as Choglas to transact all the business of the caste and Danielji Dawoodji Nagawkar Maistry is authorized to sign upon all the Pass-notes. We shall pay due honour to the said Muccadam, Manager and Choglas, and will obey their order; if any one of us will not obey their order, he will pay one hundred Rupees to the caste as fine, this power we have executed with our own pleasure. Dated in Bombay this 6th. day of August, 1823."

1. Essoobjee Badunji Thulkar Mheter; 2. Reuben Tanaji Javlikar Maistry; 3. Samuel Pezarkar; 4. Sutkel Balaji Vandekar; 5. Abrahamji Dighorkar Subedar; 6. Daniel ben Tanaji Koletkar; 7. Abaji Sillamonji Churrikar; 8. Kamaji Maji Shirgawkar; 9. Samuel Funsapurkar; 10. Daniel Samaji Pezarkar; 11. Hacham Dadba Ashtumkar; 12. Daniel Moosaji Penkar Subedar; 13. Samuel Varvatne-

kar Maistry; 14. Danielji Abrahamji Shriwardhankar; 15. Ramaji Yerulkar Subedar; 16 Abraham Hassaji Rohekar Subedar; 17. Esba ben Bhickaji Koletkar; 18. Ramaji Khandalkar; 19. Badaji Aptekar; 20. Sillamon Bhowji Pezarkar; 21. Bapuji Tulkar.

The foregoing power was registered in the Registrar's office of the Recorder of Bombay on the 9th. day of August 1823 in Book marked L, page 135, which I certify.

(Sd.) A. L. Turner,
Registrar.

This schism continued for a few years, but it was discontinued as soon as their Muccadam Subedar Sillamonji Bapuji Sankar was stabbed by his brother-in-law, i.e. his wife's sister's husband who was of the family of Pingley; for he the Subebedar ill-treated his wife's sister; while he transferred his affection to his own kept woman. This Pingley was hanged in 1838, and this is the only Bene-Israel on record that has been hanged since the Bene-Israel came into Bombay.

Although the schism of 1823 was thus removed, the germs of animosity were not rooted out. They retained their vitality, and sprouted out afresh in July 1839 when another schism, headed by Samuel Jacob Divekar, Maistry, took place. This schism it appears, took place when a dispute was going on between Samuel Jacob Divekar Maistry and his second wife Hassubai. She had complained of her ill-treatment by her husband and her complaint was being investigated by the community when the schism took place. The seceding party attributed the cause of this schism to the extortion of money by force from people, and to their oppression by Dada, as will be seen from a reply sent by Government to the petition, dated 2nd. July 1839, from Samuel Jacob Divekar, Maistry, and others. This informed the petitioners that if they had cause to complain against David Samuel Divekar for having extorted money by force from the people and oppressed them they should lay that complaint before the Senior Magistrate of Police, who is authorized to investigate such cases and give redress.

The charge of extorting money by force from people does not appear to have been brought before the Police Magistrate, but that of oppression was laid before that officer, who dismissed that charge adding a warning to the defendant. Notwithstanding this warning,

Dada's party ,it is said, annoyed these people very often, and made difficulties about the burial of their dead in order to bring them under subjection; but it was of no avail. Dada's party, however, protested against this schism, as will be seen from the copy of the petition which they addressed to Government. We must thank Mr. A. Shewan, Acting Under-Secretary to Government for favouring us with this copy from the Government records :—

To,

The Honourable Sir George Arthur Bart: K.C.H.
Governor and President in Council,
B o m b a y.

The humble petition of the congregation of Bene-Israel the Native Jews of Bombay.

Most respectfully sheweth.

"That in 1839 of the Christian Era, one of the Elders named Samuel Jacob Divekar Maistry among the Masons, had a severe quarrel with his second wife (it is customary that the Jews in general marry two wives and cohabit with both of them as of one family) and the cause of the dispute is not known to your petitioners. However the man treated her cruelly and put her out of the house unprovided for, even in respect of the common necessaries of life. This painful treatment of the said Samuel Jacob Divekar Maistry compelled his wife to submit her distressed case for redress to the Muccadam, together with the congregation of the Jews, agreeably to the standing rules of the community. The Muccadam convened an assembly and sent for the Maistry, who appeared before the assembly ,and it was demanded of him that he should state the reason for ill-treating his wife and putting her away in the manner he did.

His reply was regarded as unwarrantable and unworthy of him and disrespectful towards the congregation; after making it he left the assembly; consequently he was excommunicated both from the synagogue and the community of the Jews.

Now, to revenge himself on the Muccadam, the said Samuel Jacob Maistry, aspired to usurp the Muccadamship of the Bene-Israel in opposition to the lawful possessor named David Samuel Divekar. The first step he effected was to draw over to him a few of the disaffected men in the community under the delusive promise of

amelioration in their circumstances, and of establishing better rules etc., etc. In this way many of the Jews that came from the interior of Bombay to earn their livelihood in this place, were amongst those deluded men, who, having been employed by the Maistry, and brought under his control, became like subjects to him. When a tolerably large number of men were collected around him, together with a few men of influence, the opposite party then, with their foster chieftain, began to behave themselves in an unruly way against the orders of Muccadam and the assembly as heretofore.

This was the cause that has made a breach in the community of your Petitioners and on account of which it thence became two parties. By reason of this unhappy separation as stated above, great disturbances and evils followed in the community such as fighting, lewdness, adultery, gambling and every hateful sensuality together with drunkenness without restriction, and that quite publicly.

Owing to this disastrous conduct of the opposite party, a few of the lewd persons among your Petitioners' party also became incorrigible — consequently the best part of the community were injured, as to their characters and property — and, above all, could not show themselves out of their houses on dark nights for fear of being beaten by their adversaries. *). The Magistrate of the Police will be pleased to corroborate this assertion, if referred to.

That David Samuel Divekar is the legitimate person that your petitioners would acknowledge as the true Muccadam, as he has inherited it from his ancestors, and he has been exercising the authority as such amongst the people for more than 40 years — and no one has had the audacity to wrest it from him, nor had any accusation been brought against him but by one who had possessed the joint management of the affairs of this people for a long period under the authority of the said Muccadam, and therefore your humble petitioners earnestly pray that your honourable Board will be graciously pleased to establish and to confirm the same authority

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*) We differ from this statement; for the New Synagogue party being powerless stood the risk of being harassed by the Old Synagogue party.

on the lawful Muccadam that he has been exercising hitherto—and your petitioners further submit that unless a speedy and salutary measure be adopted, the present and continual distracted state of affairs, is calculated to prove injurious to many more amongst the people.

That as lately as 1840 A.D. the said Samuel Jacob Maistry and his party presented a petition to your Honourable Board complaining of the illmanagement of affairs by the Muccadam and the case was trasferred to the late Magistrate of Police for examination by J. Warden Esqr. That gentleman desired the said Petitioners to make good the charges by evidence; they failed to do this; and no one made any definite charges; but stated in a general way that they were dissatisfied with the Muccadam's tyrannic conduct. Whereby the Magistrate seeing the vagueness of their assertions, dismissed the said Petitioners, and said that if they were dissatisfied with their Muccadam, as they stated they were, they were at liberty to select another — and at the same time the Magistrate warned them respecting their unwarrantable conduct, and said that it was out of any one's power to dismiss the Muccadam from his office without finding cause sufficient against him, and as they had not been able to do this, it would be their duty to submit themselves to the authority of their own Muccadam.

That in the year 1843 or at the commencement of it, the said Samuel Jacob Maistry sent 2 respectable persons in deputation to the Muccadam, desiring an interview with him at the house of one Samaji Divekar, who is an Elder in the community of your Petitioners, which was granted, and that on the third day the meeting took place at the appointed time and place, and much conversation was held regarding the termination of their mutual animosities. It appears from the disposition that was manifested by the said Samuel Jacob Maistry in the assembly, that it was his desire and aim that he should be nominated as the successor of the present Muccadam, David Samuel Divekar; but being disappointed as to his expectations — he said that he should consult his party before he gave a decided answer, and that he would accomplish it within 8 days by the kind cooperation of Mr. M. Sargon, who has been taking great interest in the well-being and prosperity of the Bene-

Israel since his arrival in Bombay, by establishing schools, and meeting with them for religious conversation on every (Jewish) Sabbath day. But your Petitioners grieve to say that Mr. Sargon laboured hard to establish peace between the two parties — but alas failed in his friendly and disinterested endeavours and for his labour of love, instead of showing gratitude for his indefatigable exertions and kind interference the opposite party contrived to root up and abolish the school that he had established amongst the Bene-Israel; because they could not attend the end they designed.

In conclusion, your humble Petitioners very respectfully pray that your Honourable Board will be graciously pleased to take the distressed and distracted state of this people into Your Excellency's kindest consideration, and once more place the whole people in the condition and state they have been always hitherto permitted to enjoy under the control of the lawful Muccadam David Samuel Divekar, and your Petitioners shall in duty bound pray for the prosperity and the advancement of the British rule in all the world."

(Sd.) Hayim Suleman Kaji,
and others

Bombay, 4th. December, 1843.

The following is the reply of Government to the above Petition.

No.3085,

Bombay Castle,
30th. December, 1843.

Judicial Department,

In reply to your petition dated the 4th. inst., I am directed by the Honourable the Governor in Council to inform you that neither Government nor the Police Magistrates can interfere in caste disputes in Bombay further than to prevent breaches of the public peace, and to afford redress in cases in which the law may be violated, and that your complaints against Samuel Jacob and others should be addressed to the Senior Magistrate of Police".

By order of the Honourable the
Governor in Council.
(Sd). J. P. Willoughby
Secretary to Government.

To,

Hayem Suleman Kaji,
and others of the Congregation,
of Bene-Israetl Native Jews of Bombay.

In spite of the prevalent of disunion in the Community, Dada did his best in the matter of augmenting the synagogue funds. Moreover the Bene-Israel community in general both in Bombay and at outstations as well as those Bene-Israel in Regiments showered money offerings upon the synagogue because it was the first of its kind among them; and that too, after 2,000 year's isolation from their mother-country. Dada built a large two storied house at the cost of the congregational funds on the south side of the synagogue yielding a large income. Moreover the houses at the back and at the North side of the Synagogue were made the property of the congregation for which great credit is due to Dada. But we regret to state that the funds thus augmented were preserved only to be squandered and misspent after his death, rather than to be appropriated to the improvement of the rising generation, and to the maintenance of the poor, helpless, indigent, orphans and widows of the community. Dada died on the 2nd. April 1846, after presiding over the community for 45 years. He had six sons; S a m u e l alias B a b a j i, H y a m, I s a a c, J a c o b, D a n i e l alias L e h r e e and M o s e s otherwise called H i r a c h a n d; and five daughters. These children were, it is said, born to him by three wives living at the same time. Of the sons of Dada, Moses otherwise called Hirachand died during his lifetime. After Dada's death his eldest son Samuel alias Babaji succeeded him as headman of the community, and acted as such for about ten years. He was a prodigal son of the rich father, and lost everything he had inherited from him. He fell into the sin of keeping a woman which his own father hated. Dada's sons died on the following dates :—

Samuel alias Babaji — 30th. November 1856 without male issue.
Hyam — 5th. June, 1854 with one son by name David.
Isaac — 30th. April 1848 without issue.
Jacob — 31st. January 1854 without issue.
Daniel alias Lehree — 1873 without issue.

From a reference to the above table it will be seen that the

family of Dada was almost on the verge of extiention about the year 1873. Though Daniel the last son of Dada survived about 17 years after the death of Samuel alias Babaji, Dada's eldest son, he had scarcely any power in the community and it appeared as though he were dead, to all intents and purposes, so far as the affairs of the community here concerned. The loss of power and influence in the community was followed by penury — all the patrimony he had, being squandered in a short time.

A year previous to the death of Samuel alias Babaji who was then in almost an insolvent condition, the sons of Abraham, Dada's cousin rose to eminence in the community. They were also called commadans because their grand-father was also a Commandant in the native army. They were four brothers, — Ezekiel, Daniel, Solomon and Aaron. Of these Daniel died without any issue on the 12th. March 1861. Ezekiel and Aaron succeeded their cousin Samuel alias Babaji, and acted as headman during the minority of David Hyam of the line of Dada. David was born on the 17th. November 1850 and was only six years old when his uncle Samuel alias Babaji died. In 1855 Ezekiel and Aaron, caused with the formal consent of the community, the erection of the seven warehouses on sites belonging to the old synagogue and it appears that it cost about Rs. 11000. To complete this work they had to borrow a sum of Rs.3800, which sum was repaid from the money-offerings and rents of the house on the South side and of the newly erected warehouses during the following four years. In about January 1859 the re-building of the Old synagogue was commenced and completed on the 4th. March 1860 at a cost of Rs. 15000. Here we must state that during the time Ezekiel and Aaron were managing the affairs of the community, each of them frequently tried to usurp the authority of headmanship for himself, and hence there were ferquent dissensions between them. At one time they would be reconciled with each other, at another they would be at feud.

It might easily be imangined that much wrong was done to the Community during such a state of affairs as each one tried to do things according to his own will. If Ezekiel took the part of one, Aaron would espouse the cause of his opponent, and thus they began

to pull community affairst both ways. At such a time Solomon the second brother, was always on the side of Aaron. It appears, however, that from 1862 to the end of 1866 these brothers were reconciled; and their reconciliation was probably due to Aaron's promising his only daughter to Ezekiel's second son in marriage, probably with all his property as dowry. But this reconciliation did not continue for a long time, being evidently brought about by the dictates of self-interest. During the period of this reconciliation Ezekiel, Solomon and Aaron apparently with the consent of the Gabbai, and with the formal consent of Choglas and the Jamat (i.e. community), devised a plan of purchasing a piece of land for a J a m a t k h a n a to build a range of chawls for the use of such Bene-Israel (living both at Bombay and at outstations) as could not afford to hire a large place at the time of marriage and other ceremonies. It appears that there was only a balance of Rs.157-8-0. of synagogue funds at the time, as the rebuilding of the old synagogue and the erection of the 7 warehouses at the back of the synagogue had absorbed its funds. Aaron therefore advanced on the 22nd. December 1862 Rs.11000/- for the purchase of the site which belonged to a Bene-Israel by name I s a a c A b r a h a m R a j p u r k a r Kaji. The foundation of the Jamatkhana was laid about two years and a half later, when the old proposal for building a range of chawls was thrown aside, and a building of two storeys was commenced with the aid of a further loan from Aaron on the security of the synagogue property which was also leased to him for Rs. 2600 annually as will be seen from an "instrument of mortgage executed in Sumvat 1923 on the 14th. day of Kartik Soodh, Wednesday, to the lender named Azam Aaron Abraham Divekar Muccadam residing in Bombay by (us) the borrowers named Haskelji Abraham Divekar Muccadam Samuel Eloji Vorolkar, Gabbai, residing at the aforesaid (city)", dated 21st. of November 1866. The rent of the Jamatkhana was given to Ezekiel and Solomon in liquidation of the sums which they lent viz: Rupees 11,500 including Rs.3500 entrusted to Solomon by his sister Saibai Belokar to be given to her daughter Hanna, the wife of Mr. J o s e p h S o l o m o n J h i-

The account of the purchase of a site for the Jamatkhana which was changed into two storeyed building is taken from the published papers in the High Court appeal case No.531 on suit No.93 of 1885.

ratkar, after she attained mature age.

From that document it is obvious that the managers Ezekiel Solomon, and Aaron contrived this plan for their self-interest. Aaron thought that by lending money on the conditions therein made the synagogue property would lapse to him some day hereafter. Ezekiel gave his consent to the proposal of Aaron without demur since Aaron had promised to give his only daughter to his second son, to whom in all probability the whole property would come after Aaron's death. Solomon, who was always on the side of Aaron, was given to understand that although the daughter was given to Ezekiel's son ,the property would be given to his son. On such understanding both Ezekiel and Solomon consented to the proposal of Aaron for building a two storied house instead of the Jamatkhana which itself was not even necessarily required. This transaction suggests of itself questions which any man of common sense would have put to himself when it was stated by the Gabbai (treasurer) in his defence in a suit No.93 of 1885 brought against him by Daniel David and others that the community wanted a Jamatkhana. Why did not the Managers, Choglas, Kaji and Gabbai say that since there was no balance of synagogue fund in hand the idea of building a Jamatkhana could not be entertained? The community or Jamat according to the view of the Gabbai consisted only of the partizans of the Managers; for all good people had left attending community meetings as the managers were elated with pride and having become powerful in the community would not listen to the advice of such people. Moreover why was the idea of building a Jamatkhana adandoned if they were influenced only by considerations of pity for the condition of the people? and why did they instead build the two storied house which of course cost them much more than the creation of a Jamatkhana. If a two storied house was required at all for the sake of income to the synagogue, could they not have planned the house and estimated it and seen whether the income of it would be sufficient to defray the interest of money to be borrowed for that purpose? Why were the house on the south side of the synagogue and the seven warehouses given to Aaron the creditor on lease at such a low rate as Rupees 2600 annually when rents in Bombay were rising? Why did the Managers, Choglas,

Kaji and Gabbai bind themselves to the effect that Aaron should not be paid from any other source than the income of the synagogue? Many other questions on this faulty transactions might be raised.

Thus Aaron made himself fat on the estate of the synagogue property. But "man proposes and God disposes". According to this proverb, Aaron refused to give his daughter to Ezekiel's son. He adopted a son to whom he gave his only daugther in marriage. Solomon was also made to suffer disappointment. A crisis, however, came. and fell heavily upon Aaron, who had to mortgage his right on the synagogue property on the 11th. June 1869 to the late Dwarkadass Wassonji for Rupees 25,000/- The anxiety of redeeming the synagogue property probably hastened on his earthly end, and he died on the 13th. May 1870. His brother Solomon died on 7th. June 1871, leaving one son. After the death of Aaron, Dwarkadass sold all the rights, title and interest secured by the mortgage of the synagogue property to one Cassumbhoy Dhurrumsey, on the 24th. March 1874 for Rupees 21,500/- which give him a return of more than Rupees 500/- a month for the last twenty years. Later on, Cassumbhoy Dhurramsey and his wife Lalbai mortgaged the synagogue property to Nensey Kheraj and Rahimtoola Kheraj on the 29th. December 1881, in whose possession it remained for some years, but it is said that it has been redeemed by Lalbai since the death of her husband. But to resume our account of the headmanship. After the death of Aaron and Solomon, the headmanship was conducted by Ezekiel Abraham and David Hyam of Dada's line together. In 1872 a dispute arose in the congregation of the Old synagogue with regard to the appointment of a Hazan (Reader). Mr. Ezekiel Abraham sided with the party which maintained that a competent Hacham or Rabbi who would be the spiritual guide of the congregation should be appointed as Hazan, to rouse up the religious feelings of the Congregation which were dormant, and teach the rising generation its duties as Israelites, and promote the education of the children; while David Hyam aided by Samuel Elijah Varlokar Gabbai, Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar and others sided with the party which maintained that the son of the old Hazan should be favoured with his father's place in addition to his other temporal avocations. Both these

parties went to extremes, and although the late Mr. A. M. Gabbai, the late Mr. Dhurrumsey Poonjabhoy and Rao Bahadur Nana Moroji, the then third Magistrate of Police, tried to bring about a reconciliation, their efforts were of no avail and the praty of David Hyam, aided by Samuel Elijah Varolkar Gabbai and Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar, at last prevailed. Mr. Ezekiel and Mr. David Hyam thus separated from each other, taking their respective followers along with them. Mr. Ezekiel and his party opened a prayer-hall in a portion of the two storied house which was once intended for a Jamatkhana. Mr. David Hyam and his party on the other hand remained in possession of the old synagogue and he became the Muccadam of the old congregation everafter; but the party of Mr. David Hyam were strangers to peace and tranquility, as we may infer from the fact that disunion in their own ranks prevailed to a great extent after separation from Mr. Ezekiel and his followers. Mr. Ezekiel, too, after his severance from the Oldest synagogue, wanted to exercise his own control over communal affairs, but as some of the performers did not like it, they left him and joined the New synagogue. Thus what the old congregation and the party of Mr. Ezekiel lost, the congregation of the new Synagogue gained. In 1877-78 disputes again arose in the congregation of the Old synagogue, between the party of David Hyam and that of Samuel Elijah Varolkar Gabbai and Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar. The party of David Hyam prevailed, and the party of Samuel Elijah and Joseph Ezekiel joined the party of Mr. Ezekiel Abraham, from whom Samuel Elijah and Joseph Ezekiel and their party also dissented and separated themselves; and in 1882 Samuel Elijah opened a prayer-hall in Dhbra gully (or lane) in his own house for his party. Mr. Ezekiel Abraham Divekar Commandan died on the 5th. December 1833. In the same year overtures were made for reconciliation between the party of David Hyam and that of Samuel Elijah Varrolkar Gabbai and Joseph Ezekiel. In January 1884, a meeting of both parties was held and the terms were agreed upon, but they disagreed with each other in about 8 months as was predicted by us in a forthnightly journal called "I s r a e l", when the two parties had joined with each other; but both the parties then laughed at us. These parties went to extremes and filed suits in the High

Court of Bombay against each other, viz: No. 90 and 93 of 1885. The latter by Daniel David and others of the party of David Hyam through Messrs.: Tobin and Roughton, Solicitors, against Samuel Elijah and others, praying that the defendant, Samuel Elijah Gabbai (or Treasurer) of the synagogue in Samuel Ezekiel or Samaji Hassaji Street in Bombay be called upon for accounts of the property of the said synagogue come to the hands of the said Samuel Elijah and of the application thereof, for an account of moneys of the said synagogue come to the hands of one Haskel Abraham, and that the Defendants Dadoo and Benjamin as his heir representatives may be decreed to pay the same. That the mortgage of the synagogue property on the 21st. November 1866 may be declared fraudulent, and that the Defendant Labai may be decreed to deliver up possession of the properties in her charge, or that if the said mortgage be held valid, for redemption thereof and for accounts of what is due thereunder, and of the rents and profits of the said properties which have been received by one Aaron Abraham and his widows the defendants Bayobai and Estherbai, one Cassumbhoy Dhurremsey and the Defendant Labai for all necessary accounts and directions, and for further and other relief and for an injunction against the Defendants Hensey Kheraj and Rahimtoola Kheraj, restraining them from selling or disposing of the properties of the synagogue in their charge. But this suit was dismissed by the Court, with costs for the Defendants to be paid by the Plaintiffs. The cost of Labai and Nensey Kherai if not paid by the Plaintiffs, to be taxed against the synagogue properties.

As soon as this case was disposed of, the suit No.90 of 1885 came on for hearing. It was filed by the party of Samuel Elijah Varolkar Gabbai and Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar in the name of Aaron Jacob Awaskar and others through the Advocate General against David Hyam Muccadam, Sillamon Rahamim Tulkar Sirpunch and Shalom Solomon Kurrulkar beadle, because they would not recognize their dismissal from the management of the Old synagogue and therefore the Advocate General prayed on behalf of Gabbai's party for a declaration that the defendants did not occupy any official position in the Synagogue, and for the recovery of certain property in their hands. But the Court "held that the first defendant David

Hyam had not been dismissed. He held the office of Muccadam, not merely at will of the Community, but as long as he duly performed the duties of his office. He could not be dismissed without an opportunity of making his defence and explaining his conduct, and he had been given no notice that his conduct and his dismissal were to be discussed at a meeting of the 28th. October" (1884).

As for the second defendant the court held that he had not been duly dismissed. No evidence was given as to the exact terms on which he held office; but he was entitled to notice, and to an opportunity of defending himself before dismissal.

With regard to the third, the Court held that he had been duly dismissed. He was merely a subordinate officer, and the managers had the power of dismissing him. All the managers, save the first and second defendants, concurred in dismissing him, and in doing so, they were within their right.

In accordance with this decision David Hyam and Solomon Rahamim Tulkar were allowed the opportunity of giving explanations, which were however not accepted by the old synagogue. David Hyam and his colleague Solomon Rahamim Tulkar were formally dismissed from their office on the night of 23rd. November, 1886. David Hyam died without male issue on the 15th. November 1889 and thus the family of Dada has become extinct.

Before finishing this account of the efforts made by the community, and their final success in this undertaking, we must digress a little and make a few observations suggested to us by these attempts.

It is a matter of great regret that there are no definite rules laid down by the community for its guidance in the administration of its communal affairs. The principles which regulated the conduct of business in their midst are of the most arbitrary character, and are based upon the individual notions about things held by the managers for the time being. This want of stability and uniformity of decision is undoubtedly due to the total absence of rules in our community and it is needless to observe that results of such a procedure in the conduct of business are very prejudicial to the interest of the community. We proceed to give an illustration or two to make ourselves more intelligible. If it be decided at one time

by the Managers that the administration of the synagogue and the communal affairs should be carried on in a particular manner, the principle is allowed to be entirely upset at another time. In fact the administration of communal affairs and synagogue Government is entirely dependent upon the whims and caprices of the Punch or managers for the time being. The absence of rules is noticeable not only among the Bene-Israel living in Bombay, but the pernicious effetcts of its existence can be discovered at every place where the Bene-Israel live. This unsatisfactory state of things is undoubtedly to be ascribed to the general ignorance of our people.

It is a principle of elementary justice that when a domestic tribunal frames rules for its guidance consonant with justice and equity, the decision of the tribunal is binding when it has acted within the scope of its authority. As there are no definite rules among the community, we doubt very much whether the formal dismissal of any one from his office would be enforced in any Court unless the party dismissing him were to get a ratification of his act from some other Court of Law.

The constitution for the management of the communal affairs among Bene-Israel, which consists, as we have already said, of a Muccadam, four or five Choglas and a Gabbai or treasurer is no doubt a good one. The united voice of the Choglas is more powerful than that of a Muccadam or Gabbai; but the absence of moral courage, coupled with want of funds and education have rendered them practically useless to the community at large. They usually say a servile "Yea or nay", and bow down to the will of any headstrong opponent among the managers, whether he may be a Muccadam, a Gabbai or a Chogla. The Choglas in the times of Commandans were so much over-awed by the Muccadam that they dared not give their counsel against his will, for opposition to his proposals was invariably attended with serious consequences. If there was at all a right minded man among these councillors, his individual opoinion did not carry any weight with the hood winked majority, which was always on the side of the Muccadam. So much about the choglas of former times.

We shall now give the state of the Choglas after the rule of powerful and strong willed Muccadams had ceased. The Choglas of

modern times seem to vie with each other in usurping all power for themselves and in wishing that the affairs of the community may be administered in conformity with their own notions. Sometimes, however, they are not able to carry out their views in the face of a blind and ignorant majority, which consists of head-strong men. Sometimes their efforts are foiled because they lack moral courage sufficient to fight out the cause of the public good. As a general rule, some of the officers of our community wish to have for themselves the honour of occupying a chair on the pulpit; others desire that they and they alone should be regarded as Sirpunch or delegate of the headman. The Treasurer strives his best to retain the treasurership to himself, for ever, to the exclusion of all the rest, and yet it is not clear why he should be so anxious to retain his treasurership seeing that the office is an honorary one; another will earnestly seek that he himself should be all in the community and his word should be law. Moreover, the private lives of some of these officers are not of an unblemished character. In such a state of affairs very often the governed become unruly and try to discover the defect of their superiors. In fact even a moment's glance at the deplorable condition of our communal affairs cannot but lead one to believe that our people have been day by day tending towards a more lamentable plight. The bond of unity which ought to have been one that kept them close together has been gradually severed, and unity amongst us is on the wane. Self-interest influences more or less everybody and a spirit of apathy and heedlessness towards all good deeds, so loved by God, is the result. Jealousy is busy at work in the minds of our officers, who strive to acquire notoriety in the community. In short the vessel of communal affairs may sink or float, so long as each one carries out his wish to direct it. Each one longs to retain for himself the lead in communal affairs like some ambitious General wishing to preserve his command over an army ready for engagement without any regard as to whether it comes off victorious or defeated. So long as this ambition asserts its domination over the minds of the leaders, sad and deplorable consequences such as we have shown above must necessarily ensue, and it is impossible in the nature of things to avert them. In fine, to sum up our state in a few words, it is similar to the pro-

verbial destruction of the ship caused by the overplus of sailors.

If the affairs of the Community are in the hands of unsuitable persons, it is impossible to expect order prevailing in the affairs of the communinty. The only possible expedient that can be devised to remedy this state of things would be to frame a code of laws for the control and guidance of the officers of the Community and for the Government and the synagogue and the communal affairs, such as are made by the Great Synagogue in London, and to resolve that none should be elected unless he is a man of high morals and liberal education. Their tenure of office should not be of more than five years, though they may be eligible for re-election. Moreover, father and son, son-in-law and father-in-law, uncle and nephew, brothers or cousins should not act on a board at the same time. Besides, the treasurer should be one who is in no way connected with or related to any of the members on the board, and who should be an honest man; and he may be allowed a commission of five or at the most ten per cent and should be made to give a guarantee. All accounts should be examined annually, printed, published and circulated for the information of the congregation. Managers or Choglas should be appointed from those who rent seats, and their votes only should be taken, while the votes of all others should be considered null and void. Treasurer and Trustees be made to sign a bond that if they are removed for misconduct or for other reasons from their posts by a majority of votes that he or they shuld at once give up charge of their office without any objection. Attendance of any other person should not be allowed at the meeting of managers other than the managing committee, and attendance at the community meeting should not consist of other than those who have rented seats in the synagogue. There should be one Secretary, who would always be present at the meeting of the managing committee and that of the community and he should record all the minutes of the meeting. Ordinary expenditure such as that for oil, grapes etc., wages of Hazan and Shamash in fact the expense authorized by the Managing Committee should be made by the Treasurer. Extra-ordinary expense should not be undertaken at the mere sanction of the rate payers unless there be a sufficient balance in the congregational funds. Every expenditure and income should be estimated

beforehand and submitted to the community meeting including the Managing Committe. Money should be invested in Government Loan or in buildings. No body should be allowed to mortgage any syangogue estate, nor money to be borrowed for any new building.

The result of the state of things delineated above and continued even now, is that a small band of men gathers under the banner of one or two Choglas or a Gabbai and strives to oppose another who happens to muster strong with partizans. Since there are no rules, as already mentioned, to control the Choglas, the Muccadam and the Gabbai, while managing the affairs of the community, dissensions generally break out among them. Some of the Choglas with the assistance of the Gabbai steer the vessel of communal affairs in one direction; while others with the assistance of the Muccadam will try to lead it in another; and thus instead of doing good to the Community, they do harm to the real interests of the people. Deeply grieved at heart owing to the existence of such a sad state of affairs, we were on one occasion impelled to give vent to our feelings and condemn through the medium of "I s r a e l" (a journal published from 1881-85 for the Bene-Israel) the want of concord and harmony among the officers of our community. An evil was pointed out in our articles in that jurnal detrimental to the real interests of the Communinty, but we regret to state that none paid the slightest heed to our warning, but on the contrary the headman, Choglas, and the Gabbai as well as almost all the members of the congregation ridiculed us and jeered at our advice. Thus all our advice was entirely thrown away upon them, though every word of our prediction has come to pass since then. We would like to repeat once more that it is, in our opinion, highly desirable to choose such officers as will strive with all their might and main for the real good of our people, and exert themselves as much as possible for the amelioration of the wretched cndition of the thousands of their poor and helpless brethren who plod through life in drudgery, and that without being moved by censure or applause, by infusing into their minds real religious consolation and inculcating in them a strong and everlasting love for a secular education suitable to modern times.

Corrigenda: The footnote on p. 64 belongs to p. 63 and vice versa.

APPENDIX

(See Footnote on p. 283)

A Laoni on a Barren Woman

(by Reubenji Shahir)

I

A barren woman supplicates God:

"Grant me a child to rock in the cradle!

We are five sisters. Four of us have children, and I am the only unlucky one.

And still I do not know what may be written for me by Fate.

When I look at others
My heart is rent with envy.
Shall I burn all my wealth,
Or scatter it in the dust?
I am restless day and night.
My eyes aer ever dimmed with tears
Because I am without a child.
Even wealth is shadowed;
Only the light of a child
In the house can brighten it.
A household without a child
Is like a desolate hut."

Thus wails the barren woman, and prays to God every day.

By constant prayer and supplication, and washing away her sins by constant weeping, she prevails upon God to grant her conception.

II

She is filled with hope, and thinks, "Even my youngest sister has a child; and now, God be thanked, she has no more chance to taunt me; neither she nor any other.

The blisters on my chest and liver will soon be burst, by God's grace."

She is happy that the second month is about to pass.

The third month begins; and she says, "How wonderful and merciful is God!"

Three months have passed.
It is the commencement of the fourth.
She feels a burning sensation in her eyes.
There is a yellow shade in her cheeks;
There is sickness within her.
The husband is filled with tenderness towards her,
And she requests him to bring her d a h i (curds)
or other sour food to eat.
Now is the fifth month.
She is feeling fatigue in her hands, feet, and limbs;
And her heart palpitates.
There is now a blue shadow round her eyes.

III

When the sixth month commences they send for a priest. The priest after performing certain rituals says that the hours are auspicious, and that everything round about her should be kept clean and neat.

He advises giving alms to the poor, and says that friends should be informed of the news, and that the jealousy of enemies will be pierced with the spear of these good tidings.

He foresees that the child will be a son.
The husband is very happy.
He puts on his best clothes.
He puts on jewels.
Friends send him flowers and congratulations.
Musicians come to sing at his door.
A goat is slain in sacrifice.
The two hundred and forty days are over.
Now starts the ninth month.

IV

More sacrifices are made over the heads of the wife and the husband.

The wife is in the last stages of her long waiting.

Seeing her in travail, the husband says, "O God, since You have already been so good and kind, in mercy be still more kind, and let her agony be but brief!"

More goats are sacrificed. Many midwives are called.

The confinement has been successful.
She gives birth to a child.
Lo, it is a rose-faced son!
Their desire has been granted.
Friends flock round them;
They come in crowds, in numbers;
They bring sweets and offer congratulations.
The husband also sends for more sweets.
The sweets are thrown among the crowd
which is waiting outside.
The crowd scrambles for them.
All offer thanksgiving to God.
How wonderful He has been
In granting the barren woman
A torch to light her dark house!
The midwives are given jewels and clothes
and embroidered shawls.

V

All has gone well with the mother and the child.

The days pass quickly.

On the fortieth day the wife takes a bath, and puts on rich clothes.

A ring is placed on the child's finger.

Relations and friends assemble.

Festivities take place; feasting is going on.

Eunuchs and musicians come to sing at their door.
Everyone is making merry, dancing and singing.
The wife, with her women friends in attendance,
Puts the child in the cradle.
They rock it and sing,
"God is merciful, God is great.
He has granted a child to the barren woman.
A million thanks to God,
Who makes a mountain out of a mustard-seed,
And makes the high mountains high of ascent."
Flower-women bring flowers.
Tailors bring new clothes.
Among these is the yellow jacket for the child.
The potter brings trays full of sweets.
All these come with their gifts,
And rock the child in the cradle.

VI

Night has passed happily; morning has dawned beautifully.

The child's mother prepares m a l e e d a*) and takes it on a tray to the M u r s h a d**) Shah Ali Faqir.

She says, "It is due to saints such as he that God has been merciful and granted me a child."

Sheikh Hussein says that it is due to the intercession of holy men and saints that God sends His light in the garb of little children to barren people's homes.

Let us sing the praises of God to our hearts' content.
He is above all;
He is creator of good and evil;
His eye beholds everyone.
He feeds everyone, save only those whom He desires to test.

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*) A sort of sweet paste.
**) Perceptor, or holy man.

The child's mother returns home.
She finds there the husband, the father-in-law,
the mother-in-law,
The brothers-in-law, the sisters-in-law assembled;
They are rocking the child in its cradle.
It all looks to her like a garden,
Full of blossoms paler than gold.
In a cradle of flowers her own blossom is being rocked.
The gardener is God Himself.
All say, "The child is like a moon.
To avert the Evil Eye,
Let us bind him with a black thread."
And they bind black thread upon him,
That the Evil Eye may be averted.*)

*) These passages (a L a o n i on a Barren Woman) expound the goodness of God to those who supplicate Him, and describe how the woman's prayers are granted and the reproach of barrenness taken away from her.

They are designed to be recited to the music of drums and cymbals. They are given here in the exact metrical form of the original. They are more poetical and musical than the "L a o n i on the Kingdom of Adonai", and were obviously composed at a later period.

Unfortunately, copyists' errors abound in these as well, as may be seen by the words and phrases of various provincial dialects of India, which continually crop up incongruously amid the original Brij Bhasha.

4 Odes by Eloji Shahir *)

ODE I

The Path to Paradise

I

Pray to GOD Almighty, o friends who recognise the word A l i f. The only true name is that of GOD, remembrance whereof keeps us on the path to Paradise.

Listen, ye Israelites! Pray to the Almighty; pray three times a day, remembering this Kalma (dogma and ritual.) What are the locations of each prayer? and describe the name and signs of the same. Perform ablutions and devotions at all times. Let the intentions of all be pure.

Bow always to the Almighty. Do good; fear evil. Remember Kalma. Life is short; be prepared for sacrifice, and keep away from vice.

The only true name is that of GOD, remembrance whereof keeps us on the path to Paradise.

II

The Israelites have congregated; now listen to the Voice of GOD. The Voice has been explained in the T a w of Torath and M e m of Moses.

Thou shalt have no other image but Mine in thy heart. The only true name is that of GOD; bear this ever in thy mind.

*) The translation of the following Laonis and the remarks to them have been submitted by Mr. Devan Sharar, an Indian journalist of London.

Thus spake GOD: "Act with the purest of intentions. The Israelites belong to Me, and they should observe the Sabbath. Observe all religious festivals, and forget not what GOD hath given thee."

The only true name is that of GOD, remembrance whereof keeps us on the path to Paradise.

III

In the congregation of the learned I ask of you the meaning of the Book.

You who are wise, explain to us, the ignorant, word by word the M e m of MELEKH,*) the K o f of KADOSH. May you ever be Mineq. Tell me quickly the meaning of this; and then take in your hands the d u f f and c h u n g (drum and harp).

Explain to us the theme of SHIR LAMALOTH, and also of VEYITEN LEKHA; and the conditions of WEHU RAHUM; and unravel these mysteries before the congregation. Tell us also the meaning of the words ASHAMNU, BAGADNU.

The only true name is that of GOD, remembrance whereof keeps us on the path to Paradise.

IV

GOD is the Master and Maker, the Fearless and the Omnipotent.

King Saul ruled, and all this is his realm. King Saul with his collected forces went forth to fight. Jonathan went alone against the Philistines. This is the theme of a book which the poet Eloii repeats.

Samuel the Plume-Wearer drank the Cup of Wisdom; and Reuben said, "Forget not the word BOHUL!' Give them no quarter!

The only true name is that of GOD, remembrance whereof keeps us on the path to Paradise.

*) This and the following throughout the Laonis are Hebrew words taken from different prayers (I. O.)

ODE II

The Kingdom of Adonai

I

Hearken, ye brethren minstrels! The letters of AMRANI are separate. Say that the meaning of ALIF is the Kingdom of Adonai. BETH, BRAKHA MESO NOTH were shown in order to procure foodstuff. You have performed the ablution of BEMIS WOTHAV, and thereby realised well the theme of the BOOK.

Everyone is fully cognisant of this path; what more have you shown us? Wherefore have you forgotten the realties, and the chapters of ARBA WE-ESSRIM? Which chapter should be read, and on what day? This you have not shown either.

Tell me quickly the meaning of all this, and reveal your wisdom.

Say that the meaning of ALIF is the Kingdom of Adonai.

II

When the Hebrews set out for Egypt, this road was closed. But when Moses made a gestuer of his hand to the wide span of waters, they divided. Count then, O Poet, on a quarter of this miraculous gesture, and create wonderment in the congregation by striking the harp.

This is the story that I tell from the Book. Why do you, O Poet, sing of unreal themes? Follow the Torath faithfully. When I ask you of the subtle meaning of the Book, why do you exaggerate?

Say that the meaning of the ALIF is the Kingdom of Adonai

III

Tell me the meaning of ADONAI, SAFATHAI, MODIM, OSSE, SHALOM; and explain it fully to me in Hindi.

Give me the detailed sense of RANENU, SADDIKHIM, MISMOR, SHIR LEYOM, ANNA, ADONAY.

Be you my pupil now and I your instructor, and know your master by wisdom. You who have been initiated without a master, do not prattle unnecessarily. Tell me the secret quickly lest the curse of the Book befall you.

Say that the meaning of ALIF is the Kingdom of Adonai.

IV

The four Books have come down to the world, and laid down the laws of the fast and the prayer. But which Book came down on which day? That mystery has not been unfolded.

Why have you forgotten the true faith, being as you are a son of Israel? Little knowledge and plenty of pretence and plunder: that's what the K a u l h a t i s*) have spread.

Fearless Lord, the poet Eloji has reached the subtle interpretation of the Book. Naroo-babi Ji, who is the Most Enlightened One, has installed the harp in every synagogue.

Listen to the most wise belief of Samuel and Reuben.

Say that the meaning of ALIF is the Kingdom of Adonai.

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*) Infidels (?)

ODE III

Stories which Stir the Soul

I

Listen and hear a secret, O Poet! I will tell you stories from the Book which shall stir your soul.

King Saul ruled over the Israelites. The Philistine King begrudged him hs power; and, joining the troops of Baluthuri with his own, went forth against him. The Israelites were alarmed, and Saul was terrified.

I am telling you secrets out of the theme of the Book; stories which shall stir your soul.

II

One of the warriors of the Philistine troops came forth and said, "Is there any man here who will fight me in single combat?" Hearing this loud challenge, the Israelites gave a shout of "GOD!" and one carried this report to David.

David said, "Who is that man? Come, tell me. I have overthrown many like him. What is the might of the Philistines? I will smite them."

Hear, O Poet! I am telling you secrets out of the theme of the Book; stories which shall stir your soul.

III

The news of David's words was brought to King Saul. Saul said, "Who is this man?" They said, "David, son of Isshei."

They brought him to King Saul. Saul said, "You do not look a warrior, and you do not know whom you have undertaken to fight." David said again, "What is the might of the Philistines?"

Hear, O Poet! I am telling you secrets out of the theme of the Book; stories which shall stir your soul.

IV

David rushed forth to meet the Philistines' champion. From the brook he picked up three pebbles, and confronted Goliath.

Goliath said, "O stripling, how can you fight with me?" David, calling upon the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, put a pebble in his sling and aimed it at Goliath and slew him.

Hear, O Poet! I am telling you secrets out of the theme of the Book; stories which shall stir your soul.

V

David, having killed Goliath, drew Goliath's sword and with it cut off Goliath's head.

Thus spake Shah Ali Murshad.

Elijah and Ezekiel, having gleaned these notable points from the Book, were wont to chant them to the congregations of the Tribe of Moses.

Hear, O Poet! I am telling you secrets out of the theme of the Book; stories which shall stir your soul.

ODE IV

Te Prophet Moses Read the Torah

I

The Prophet Moses read the Torah, which is the meaning of AMRAEEN.

The praise of the Prophet is the music of GOD. I would ask the Wise Ones the meaning of the words BARUKH, ATA, ADONAI, ELOHIM, MELEKH, MESONOTH.

There is significance in each word, and there is a royal umbrella over each of these, and on the umbrella is the Light of GOD.

There is mention in Torath of the theme of ARBA WEESSRIM.

By playing the drum and harp in the synagogue I can create a following for you.

The Prophet Moses read Torath, which is the meaning of AMRAEEN.

II

What is the significance of AL NETILATH YADAYIM; and when should BORE, ISBE, BESAMIM be used?

By hearing the letters of BESAMIM, why do you not do HAIM, TOBIM?

If you comprehend all these matters, then are you a truly learned poet.

If you can understand the ALIF in Abraham, and the G in

Gabriel, and recognise Moses as Prophet and the Chosen One, then you truly begin to understand GOD.

The Prophet Moses read Torath, which is the meaning of AMRAEEN.

III

Tell me, brother, when to read the words ASHER KIDE-SHANU BEMISWOTHAV?

On Mount Tur GOD showed His light to Moses. All these things are given in Torath. I challenge you to explain to me the significance of these, in the name of a hundred and eighty thousand prophets.

The Prophet Moses read Torath, which is the meaning of AMRAEEN.

IV

Who was the favourite of the Prophets? What was the age of the Prophet Moses? When did Torath and the other Books come down? What are the names of AMRAEEN, and tell me the traditions of the twelve sons of Jacob.

It is useless singing all night to the accompaniment of drum and harp without knowing the significance of these matters, O brother minstrels.

The Prophet Moses read Torath, which is the meaning of AMRAEEN.*)

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*) These passages are a Hindi Laoni (versified sermon, or Katha), recited or sung to the accompaniment of cymbals or drums, or both.

It is written in Brij Bhasha with occasional Persian and Arabic words. The style shows it to be from fifty to a hundred years old. The manuscript from which this translation has been made, and which is in Dr. Olswanger's possession, is fairly old, but is undoubtedly a copy, and contains copyist's errors which make the text occasionally obscure.

It contains very little poetry, but great religious fervour. The catechistic form of most of the questions — (though a few are purely rhetorical) indicates that it was used as a form of religious instruction among the Indian Hebrews.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Haeem Samuel Kehimkar

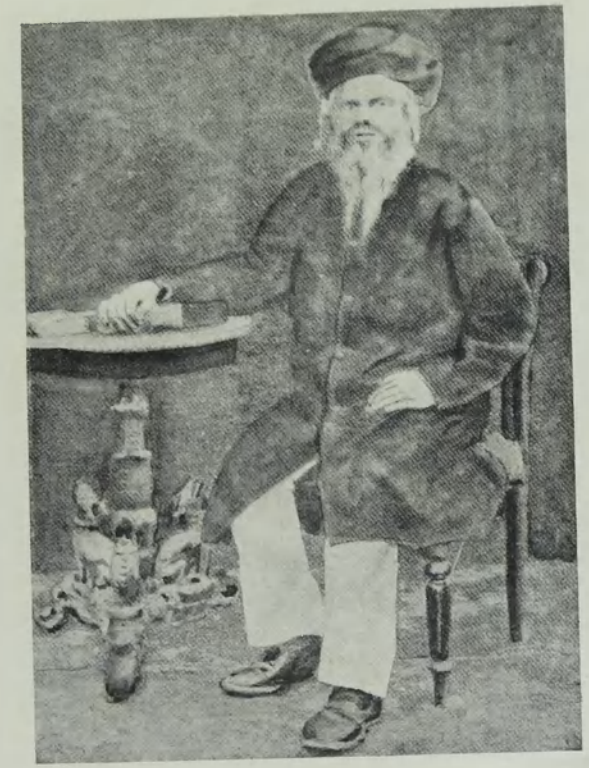
Joseph Ezekiel Rajpurkar

Dr. Abraham Hyams (Kehimkar)

Joseph Solomon Jiratkar Poona

Reuben Samuel Kehimkar, Bombay

Joseph Samuel Kehimkar



Dr. Abraham Benjamin Erulkar (1822-1887)

Old B. I. with specific turban

Bene Israel Free-Masons

Magen Abraham Synagogue (Ahmedabad)
visited by Lord Brabourne

Joseph David Pinkar, well-known play-wright

Miss Rebecca Reuben, Head mistress of the Eli Kadoorie School, Bombay

Sirdar Bahadur Solomon Elijah Wakrulkar

Subedar Haskelji Israel
(Ezekiel Solomon Penkar)

David Haeem Divekar

Subedar Abraham Samuel Divekar

Subedar Joseph Ezekiel Kolatkar

Sirdar Bahadur
Solomon Isaac Zawlikar

Sirdar Bahadur Haskelji Isaji Zavlikar

(Ezekiel Haeem Talkar)
Subedor Major Haskelji Israel

Elija Hazan of Bombay (d. 1871)

B. I. lady at vegetable market, Bombay

B. I. at Simhath Tora festival

B. I. carpenters

Mrs. Hannabai, widow of late Hyam David Divekar
(who built the synagogue in Pen)
with her son David Hyam

Bene Israel lady and son
(now Mr. Daniel Moses of Bombay, aged 73)

B. I. woman at Hand-mill

B. I. villagers

B. I. with children

B. I. women in Saris and Indian Ornaments

Komadan Muccadam
Sileman Abraham Divekar

Bene Israel lady with her children

B. I. lady with marriage ring and necklace

B. I. family

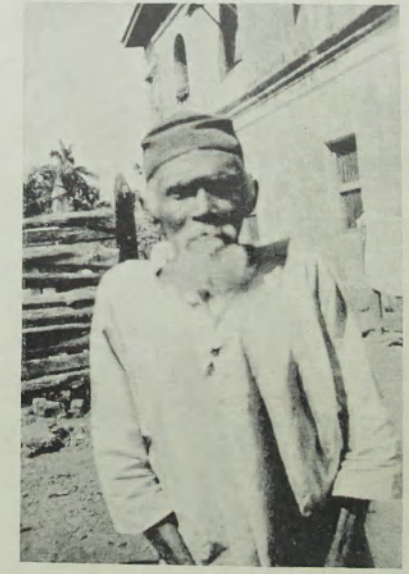
The author and his family

Bene Israel family

B. I. women with Saris and ornaments

B. I. villager

B. I. in Pen



Old B. I. villager

Daniel Joseph Thalkar (d. 1882) and family

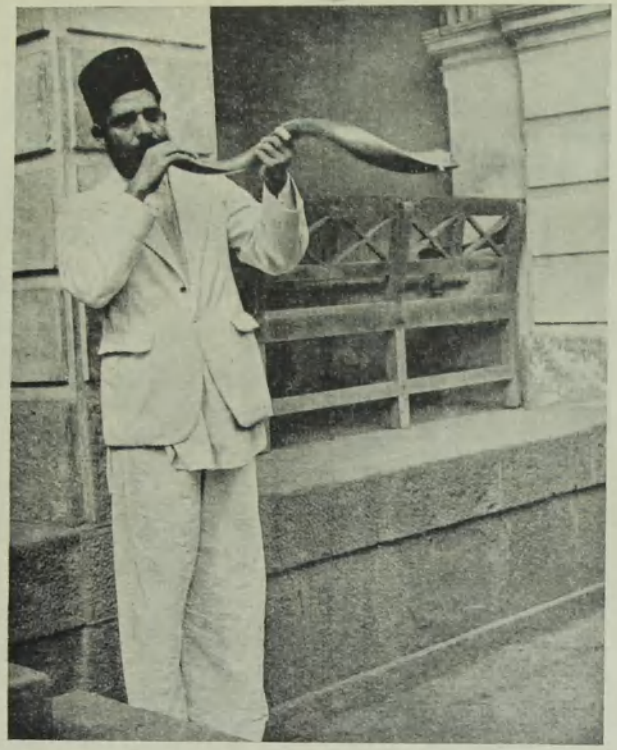
Three B. I. generations

Bene Israel children of Pen

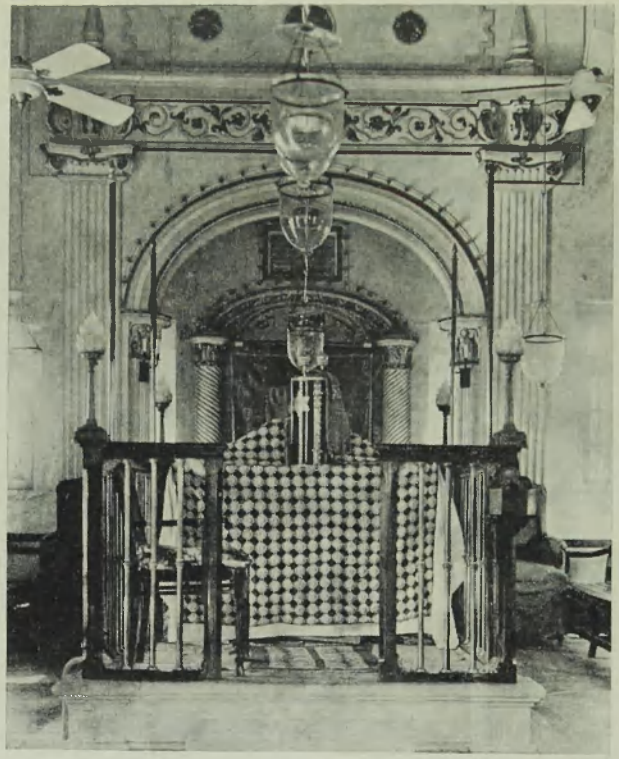
B. I. with Shofar

Bene Israel in Bombay at a reception given to Dr. Immanuel Olsvanger (November, 1936)

B. I. community of Ahmedabad at a reception given to Dr. Olsvanger (1936)



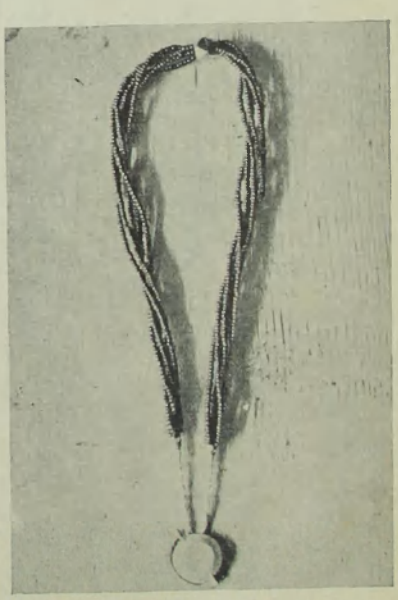
The blowing of the shofar



Interior view of the "Shaar Hashamaim" synagogue, Thana, built in 1879

Interior of a synagogue

Wedding ring (gold and silver) in olden times



Lacha or necklace of black glass beads and a centre bead of gold